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JOSHUA HAGGARD'S DAUGHTER

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JOSHUA HAGGARD'S DAUGHTER

A Novel

BY THE AUTHOR OF
'LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET'

ETC. ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.



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THIS STORY IS DEDICATED
TO
CAPTAIN THE HON. JOHN CARNEGIE, R.N.
IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT
OF
HIS KINDLY INTEREST IN THE AUTHOR'S WORK
AND OF
HIS HEARTY COÖPERATION IN THE
OPENING SCENE.

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JOSHUA HAGGARD'S DAUGHTER

CHAPTER I.

THE CRUEL CRAWLING FOAM.

THERE was darkness over the land—darkness that might be felt. In the midst of the ripe warm harvest-time, when all things were at their fairest, and the farmers about Combhaven were congratulating each other on the glorious weather, the storm came: a strange bluish blackness overspread the sky—metallic, tempest-charged, not one cloud or many clouds, but a darkening of the face of heaven. It was like a sudden twilight at noon.

‘It mun be a ’clipse, I think,’ said old Jabez Long, the fisherman, contemplative of that awful horizon yonder, where one streak of copper-coloured light made a narrow rent between sea and sky.

'Eclipse, man!' cried his neighbour; 'how can it be a 'clipse, when there ain't none in the almanick? It's more like a judgment than a 'clipse, to my mind—a judgment agen the farmers for making bread so dear last Chrisselmas. Sarve 'em right if their corn's drowned afore they can get it under cover.'

There was no rain yet, but when the rain came by and by, it would be a flood, thought that little group of awe-stricken fishermen gathered in front of the Ring of Bells public-house, at the fishermen's end of Combhaven.

'Look at the sea,' exclaimed Jabez, pointing seaward.

It had a curious look, the ocean—that sea which in summer-time was wont to seem an emerald lake dappled with purple shadows. To-day the water was a dull red, darkened to indigo here and there. There was a strong ground-swell, and the sea heaved like a passionate bosom stirred with deepest anger. White surf came creeping up the sand, and with every receding wave there rose a roar like distant thunder.

‘An angry sea,’ cried Jabez. ‘I hope the young Squire won’t try to come in from Clovelly upon such a tide as this.’

‘Has he gone to Clovelly?’ asked Mike Durran, the younger of the two men. Both were old and gray and rugged, and had a look of having aged rather from hard weather than from the flight of years. Time had crawled for these villagers, winters and summers creeping slowly on their sluggish course; much labour, little pleasure. They must have felt a century old at least.

‘Yes, he sailed yesterday morning, and was to be back to-day. Him and Jack and the lad Peter; not enough of ’em to manage that clumsy old tub of his, to my mind. He’ll get into trouble some day, I’m afeard.’

‘Money’s scace with him, I’m thinking,’ said Mike.

‘Money’ll never be anything but scace while the old Squire’s alive,’ answered Jabez. ‘There’s money enough and to spare hid away somewheres; but nobody’ll ever see the colour of it while he’s alive.’

‘Not they,’ groaned Mike Durran; and there was a general groan from the little group of idlers, by way of tribute to the Squire.

‘Hard upon everybody,’ said Jabez.

‘Hardest of all upon his own flesh and blood,’ said another man. ‘His cruelty drove his second son to sea.’

‘Arnold,’ said Jabez. ‘Ah, a fine lad that! I remember ’im; a fine out-spoken lad, with a kind word for every one.’

‘Ah, he were the right sort, he were,’ said Mike; ‘not like Mr. Oswald. He haven’t a word to throw at a dog, wrapped up in his-self, and proud as Lucifer; and as for the colour of his money—well, I never see it.’

This implies the deepest depth of unpopularity—a man unable or unwilling to give.

At this juncture there came a silence in the little assembly, and all eyes were turned in the same direction to look at a man who came round the sharply-jutting cliff which ran out seaward into a dangerous reef, and cut off this straggling bit of sea-shore from the tidy little town that nestled in a cleft

of the fertile Devonian hills. On this side of the promontory there was the original fishing village, a row of ancient thatched cabins built against the cliff, and that popular house of entertainment, the Ring of Bells, a low-roofed, old-fashioned dwelling, with steep gables and curious abutments and ceilings whose rough-hewn beams scarcely cleared the heads of its tallest customers.

The person whose approach commanded the general attention was a man of somewhat striking appearance. Tall, broad-shouldered, with a head nobly mounted on the throat of a gladiator, penetrating black eyes, boldly-cut features, a swarthy complexion, a square lower jaw, and a capacious strongly-marked brow—he was a man to attract attention anywhere. Intellect and power had set their seal upon his face, and his bearing was that of one accustomed to command. A man of superior mind, stranded for life in such a place as Combhaven, might naturally think himself a king.

The new-comer's costume was that of the yeoman class. He wore knee-breeches, coarse gray knitted stockings, and stout buckled shoes. His only dis-

tinguishing characteristic was a white cravat, but this was a symbol which marked his power and authority over that little group of rough fishermen; and Mrs. Jakes, the landlady, who stood at her door listening to the discourse of her customers, dropped a low curtsy at sight of the man in the white neckcloth.

Joshua Haggard was a strong influence in the little town of Combhaven, being chief custodian of the souls of its inhabitants, from Miss Tremaine, the rich maiden lady at Tremaine Place, to the grubby kitchen-wench at the Ring of Bells, who cleaned herself once a week, and, with face smarting from the vigorous application of mottled soap and coarsest huckaback, went to Little Bethel to hear Mr. Haggard preach. It was over the womankind of Combhaven, doubtless, that Joshua was most potent; but the men, if they went to any place of worship, did it for the most part to please their womankind; and thus was Little Bethel crowded to overflowing on warm summer evenings; while the white-haired vicar of Combhaven preached his drowsy orthodox sermon to the school-children, the

pew-opener and beadle, and the half-dozen stanch followers of the Established Church who had not overeaten themselves at dinner, or drunk too much after that ponderous and hearty meal.

Fifty years ago the Established Church was nowhere in Combhaven, as compared with Joshua Haggard and Little Bethel. The great Anglican revival has doubtless awakened that slumberous old parish-church into new life and vigour, and left Little Bethel in the rear; but in those days Bethel was dominant, and to sit under Joshua was to be in the right way to salvation, in the opinion of Combhaven; always excepting certain old families of landed estate, and the more substantial of the tenant-farmers, who clung to the Established Church like barnacles to a ship's bottom, and with little more ability to reason upon their faith than the barnacles. They stuck to the Church of England chiefly because their fathers had done so, and they looked down upon Joshua as a ranter, and follower of that low person, John Wesley.

Mr. Haggard had his temporal avocation and business in life as well as his spiritual profession,

and a man of less energy and intellect would have hardly fared so well as he did with both. The business he had inherited from his father. His clerical position he had made for himself. He had received no collegiate education; he was a member of no convocation. If he followed any other light than his own it was assuredly that lamp which John Wesley lighted nearly a century earlier; yet the Wesleyans would have disowned Joshua Haggard. Early in life he had taken to field-preaching, and had made as great an impression upon his benighted hearers as Whitfield made in the woods near Bristol. When his father died, reconciled to his only son at the last, and leaving Joshua his business and a nice little lump of money in the bargain, Joshua built himself a chapel, and settled down after his wanderings in his native town. He belonged rather to the order of Primitive Methodists, founded by Vincent Bourne, than to any other denomination; but he was a man of more original mind and broader views than are common to Methodist preachers, and a loving student of the old Puritan Divines.

Haggard's was one of the best shops in Comb-

haven. Ostensibly devoted to groceries, it gave a counter to linen-drapery, supplied its customers with stationery, and was generally willing to procure any article that might be wanted in Combhaven from the larger resources of Barnstaple or the illimitable storehouses of Exeter. Enthusiast as Joshua really was in religion, he never neglected his trade; order and attention marked the conduct of his business; a scrupulous honesty recommended him even to careful housekeepers. No adulterated coffee, no sanded sugar, came from his stores; to say that any article came from Haggard's was tantamount to saying it was the best that money could buy. Haggard's eight shilling mixed tea was a specific for nervous headache, and for plasters in urgent cases no one thought of using any mustard but Haggard's.

Joshua being a widower of some years' standing, the feminine element in the business was supplied by his maiden sister Judith, a woman of commercial mind, frugal housewifely habits, and energy as inexhaustible as her brother's. She was of Joshua's temperament as regarded mundane things, but lacked his loftier aspirations and spiritual views. Piety

with her was of rather a mechanical order, dependent upon the number of her attendances at church. She took an ascetic view of life, especially as regarded the lives of other people, and was continually cutting off some small enjoyment or gratification of mind or senses as 'a snare.' She was the sole and despotic ruler of Joshua's household and family, the family consisting of one son and one daughter, the household of a sturdy maid-of-all-work, a shopman, and a boy who carried out goods in barrow or basket, and occasionally came to grief by upsetting a box of eggs or breaking a vinegar-bottle.

Joshua Haggard's house and garden were always the pink of neatness, his shop was a model of cleanliness and precision; and his life altogether was so wisely ordered, so temperate, regular, and honourable, that he himself seemed the highest example of that sober Christian life he preached to others. When he read the first Psalm, in that rich sonorous voice of his, his congregation thought of him as the man whose 'delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law doth he meditate day and night.'

‘ And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season ; his leaf also shall not wither ; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

‘ The ungodly are not so—’

Ah, with what pious unction, with what a triumphant sense of superiority, with what confidence and security against the possibility of temptation assailing *him*, used Joshua Haggard to roll out the denunciatory verses that follow !

The minister, as Joshua was called in Combhaven, did not come to the Ring of Bells to drink or make merry. He was the most sober of men, without being an absolute abstainer, and, except a mug of small-beer with his dinner and supper, rarely tasted anything stronger than water. He came to the water-side tavern to reprove and exhort. Mrs. Jakes had absented herself from chapel for the last two Sabbaths, and this backsliding was a fact to be inquired into by a shepherd solicitous for the welfare of his flock.

‘ The Saturday nights have been so trying, Mr.

Haggard,' replied Mrs. Jakes to her pastor's grave remonstrance. 'The fishermen will sit so late and get so quarrelsome. It's enough to make one feel tired and addled-like next morning.'

'If you were more careful of the good of your soul than of filthy lucre, Mrs. Jakes, you wouldn't let the men stay late enough to tire you, or drink enough to get quarrelsome.'

'Ah,' sighed the landlady, with a doleful shake of her head; 'it's lucky for they as was brought up to a virtuous business. I was brought up to mine by they as went before me, and I'm obliged to abide by it.'

'Put it away, if you find it a snare, Mrs. Jakes. Put it away, if you see that it leads others to evil ways. Selling drink to the intemperate is like going into partnership with Satan. Dissolve the firm, my dear woman, and put your trust in God.'

'I might do that, Mr. Haggard; but how should I face the tax-gatherer, or the brewer's man, or the old Squire's bailiff when he calls for my rent?'

'Have you forgotten how the sparrows are cared for, Mrs. Jakes?'

‘ Ah, sir, it’s well for the sparrows ; yet I’ve seen a many o’ they tumble out of their nestes, poor things. Sparrows is made without much sense, and there’d need be somebody to look after ’em. But I fancy Providence meant us to do for ourselves, and do the best we can in the business we’re brought up to.’

‘ You remind me of the young man in the Gospel, Mrs. Jakes, who went away sorrowful because he clung to his great riches.’

‘ It isn’t riches as I cling to, Mr. Haggard. It’s bread - and - cheese. The leopard might as easy change his spots as I go out of the public line ; and if I could take to another business maybe my neighbours wouldn’t like it. You wouldn’t care to see me open a grocer’s shop, now, would ’ee, sir ?’

Joshua Haggard smiled — a comfortable self-assured smile. He knew that his business was established upon a basis not easily assailable. Plenty of capital, shrewd judgment, long experience, unflinching industry, and the special protection of Providence. Who should prevail against these ?

'Look,' cried Jabez Long, taking his pipe out of his mouth, and pointing to the livid horizon line. 'Look, lads, there she be—the Dolfing.'

A patch of white sail—ghastly white against the leaden sky—glimmered on the edge of the sea. All eyes turned to it in anxious if not affrighted scrutiny. Poor struggling sail, how it wavered and dipped, now vanishing, now reappearing! It was like a human soul battling with the troubled waters of sorrow and sin.

The wind had risen while Joshua Haggard had been standing just inside the stone-paved kitchen discoursing the words of wisdom to Mrs. Jakes—a mighty wind that came shrieking up from the sea, and swept over the fertile hills, and into the wooded gorges, like an evil spirit intent upon the ruin of mankind.

But the wind was not yet at its worst, for far away to seaward a line of foam showed like a white rift between the black darkness of sky and sea. Well did the fishermen know what this portended. A heavy squall was coming.

'He ought to ha' stayed at Clovelly,' said Mike

Durran; 'none but a madman would sail in yon cockleshell with a gale coming. Why, she'll be swamped by the sea, or have the mast taken clean out of her and be druv on they rocks. That there boat'll be smashed like a nutshell agen they rocks if he don't take care.'

'He's a good sailor, isn't he?' asked Joshua Haggard.

'Good sailor! ay, to be sure. If he warn't he'd never be able to manage the boat as he is doing with such a sea running. There isn't a better in these parts. He and his brother allus hankered after the sea. But if he don't get too much of it this time, I'm a Dutchman.'

There was a coolness in the speech that astonished Mr. Haggard; but life is cheap on these rocky shores, and a man drowned, more or less, makes no great sensation. The young Squire was no favourite with these fishermen. He was reserved, and they gave him credit for pride. He felt the restraint and injustice of his position as the son of a miserly father. He had nothing to give his fellow-men, and was thought mean.

'What!' exclaimed Joshua; 'do you think that boat is in danger?'

'Ay, danger enough,' answered Jabez. 'See, the squall is a'most upon her. If we see her agen when it clears, I shall be surprised.'

Nearer and nearer to the Dolphin came that line of white foam with its black background of wind and rain. Another moment and it was on her. They could see her heel over to the first gust of the storm. The next instant the white sail vanished.

'She is gone!' exclaimed Haggard.

'No; but the mast has gone—snapped off like a carrot. Nothing can save her now. She will be swept on the rocks, and the sea will make short work of her.'

'And you stand here quietly, smoking and drinking, while a fellow-creature's life is in jeopardy—you—seamen!'

The squall which had settled the fate of the Dolphin was by this time upon them, the blinding rain driving into their eyes, so that they could hardly distinguish anything to seaward. What they could see was not encouraging, for the huge waves came

leaping up the beach, roaring and hissing at them like sea-monsters thirsting for their blood.

Most of their boats were securely hauled up on the beach, above the estuary of a small stream that falls into the sea a short distance from the town. Thus they might launch them with safety; but could they, dare they, pull out to sea in the teeth of the wind, and in such a sea? And even if they did, could they be in time? The Dolphin was drifting fast towards the reef. Would it not be a useless hazard of their lives?

The fishermen looked at each other, and then at Joshua Haggard, doubtfully. They were none of them young men—declined into the vale of years rather, and much weather-beaten.

‘We’ve wives and families to think about,’ said Durran. ‘They’re o’ more account to us than the young Squire.’

‘A deal we should get by it if we risked our lives to bring the Dolfing safe ashore,’ added Jabez.

‘And you would see a fellow-creature perish!’ cried Haggard, horrified at this inhumanity. These were of his flock; it was to these he preached the

gospel—self-abnegation, love of one's neighbour—sometimes of a Sunday evening.

‘No talk of perishing yet a while,’ said one.

‘He ought to ha’ stayed at Clovelly,’ said another.

Joshua Haggard arched his hands above his eyes and looked out seaward. The squall had spent its force, though it was still blowing furiously. The rain which had been driven before the blast had cleared off, and the Dolphin was to be seen, a black spot upon the troubled sea. To leeward of her, between her and the spot on which they were standing, a line of black rocks and seething foam denoted the reef which ran from the point at the west of the bay into the sea. It was a narrow ledge of rocks, which was uncovered at low water, terminating in one larger and higher than the rest, which showed its head above water even in the highest tides. Now the tide was nearly out, and the whole line of reef could occasionally be seen as the huge waves rose and fell, inky black against the white foam which covered the reef, and streamed over the leeward side like a cataract.

A little to the westward of the Ring of Bells, and close to the rocks at the point, a single boat was hauled up. It had been a merchant vessel's dingey. Small and old, but yet strong, it could be launched under the shelter of the cliff into almost smooth water. Joshua glanced at the dingey, then at the Dolphin, which was drifting fast to her fate.

'I can handle a pair of sculls with any man in Combhaven,' he said; 'lend me your dingey and a coil of rope, Jabez.'

'What! ye're not going out in the teeth o' such a wind, Master Haggard?' cried Long.

'I'm going to save human lives, if I can,' answered Haggard. 'He who walked the waters and stilled the tempest will be with me!'

'Nay, master, but we'll go instead of 'ee,' cried Jabez.

'Ay, to be sure we will,' said Durran; and there was an assenting murmur from the rest of the group, and a move towards the little estuary, where the boats lay bottom upwards, trembling and groaning as the wind shook their battered old timbers.

'No,' cried Joshua decisively, 'you have wives

and families unprovided for. Mine will be well supplied with temporal blessings if the waters should swallow me; and if they were penniless I could trust them to Him who rules on sea and land.'

Joshua ran to the dingey and pushed it down to the water amidst the remonstrances of the fishermen, now all eager to rush to the rescue.

'Not one of you shall go with me,' he cried, with that fiery enthusiasm which gave him his strongest influence on his flock. 'The Lord has given these lives into my hand. I am going alone. Give me the rope and the sculls.'

They obeyed him submissively; but farther down the beach a larger boat was being got ready for sea at the same time. There was no question now of wives and families to be left to the tender mercies of the parish.

Joshua had not boasted when he called himself a good oarsman. He was a man skilled in many things—a man who must needs have been dominant in any station. Fate had made him a dissenting parson, but if Fate had chosen to make him soldier or sailor, he would have come to the front.

He had no easy task before him. For a short distance he was sheltered by the cliff; but when that was cleared, he felt the full fury of the wind sweeping down on him. From the waves he was still sheltered by this reef, which acted as a natural breakwater. Still, as the heaving seas dashed on and over it, they made a seething caldron of foaming and perturbed water, which rendered Joshua's progress a matter of extreme difficulty, the little boat being rocked to and fro, so that he could hardly handle his sculls with any effect.

Joshua glanced over his shoulder as he desperately pulled on. About a hundred yards from him he saw the Dolphin, not yet in the breakers, but drifting down on them a little on the shoreward side of the large rock at the end of the reef. Her crew had not given way to despair. Hopeless as it seemed, they had got out a small pair of oars, which were always kept in her, and had endeavoured with them to propel her past the reef; but finding that impossible, and seeing the gallant little boat coming to their rescue, they were steering for a place where a slight cleft in the reef gave them the best chance of

being washed over without their lives being dashed out of them on the rocks.

Away to leeward they could see a larger boat, manned by six vigorous fishermen, struggling against the wind and sea; but their fate must be decided before she could reach them. The little boat was their only chance.

Joshua gave but one glance, and then, with a heartfelt prayer upon his lips, gave all his energies to the task before him.

'The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea,' cried Joshua.

He was not a moment too soon. He had hardly got abreast of the spot where he had last seen the Dolphin, when she struck. Carried on the crest of a wave she lighted on the top of the reef, and that one shock destroyed the slightly-built old pleasure-boat. In a moment more two forms were seen struggling in the foam on the lee-side of the reef, half stunned by the shock, half choked by the water. One after the other Joshua pulled these two into the rocking dingey. The first was the lad Peter, the

second Jack the skipper. But where was the young Squire ?

Joshua's keen eyes scanned surf and rocks, and at last discovered him. There he was on the highest part of the reef. The wave that had thrown him there had not had power to carry him over, but had left him stunned apparently, with just life enough to cling instinctively to the ridge of the rock. As every seaman knows, the waves succeed each other with varying bulk and power ; first a series of medium-sized waves, then a few higher ones, culminating in two or three that overtop all the rest. The young Squire had been thrown up by the last big wave of the series. The next big wave would either wash him over to the lee-side of the reef, or else the backwash would draw him into its vortex, and the returning wave would dash out what little life he had remaining. To go to his assistance was to risk sharing his fate. No personal danger would prevent Joshua from at least trying to save him ; but to get to him was no easy task.

To land on the rock was not only difficult in the extreme, but hazardous, not only of Joshua's own

life, but of the lives of those two he had already rescued. These had now in somewise recovered from the immersion and the shock they had sustained while carried along by the vast bulk of water, and had almost come to their wits.

The boat lying, as she did, under the lee of the reef was much sheltered ; but still the rise and fall of the large waves rendered any attempt at landing on the reef full of peril.

Joshua gave the sculls into the hands of the skipper and his mate, then steadied himself in the bow, and prepared to leap on the reef. No easy matter. One moment the boat was on a level or almost above the rock, the next it was many feet below. If the bow of the dingey caught the rock as the water fell, the boat was doomed. If Joshua sprang and missed his footing, his destruction was almost inevitable.

But upon Joshua Haggard the knowledge of this peril had no deterring influence. Long-familiar texts were in his mind even at this moment ; his heart, amidst the roar of the waves, lifted up its voice to his God. What if death came in the effort

to do this good work? It was but a plunge into the dark dividing stream that parted the Christian from his eternal country.

‘But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ships pass thereby. For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King; He will save us.’

He thought of the poor fellows he had rescued rather than of himself. Their calling and election might not be sure. Here, perchance, were two sinners still unreconciled with their God.

‘Pull your starboard scull,’ he cried. ‘That will do. One stroke together—back-hand.’

As the last order was given, Joshua sprang on the rock—just a little too late. He had timed it well too; but even the most practised sailor would have found it difficult to steady himself for the spring in that cockleshell of a boat, tossed about like a cork in the seething foam. As he raised himself on the bow-thwart he staggered back, and though he recovered himself instantly for the leap, the favour-



able moment had passed. Instead of springing from a rising motion, he sprang from a falling one; and though he lighted on the rock, it was not on his feet. He fell heavily against the edge of the reef, bruising and wounding himself severely; but he clung to the reef with his fingers, and succeeded after a hard struggle in gaining a foothold on the rock. He was bleeding and exhausted; but only a few yards of slippery reef now separated him from the object of his hazardous attempt. A few yards; but they were yards not easily passed; the seas were still dashing over them; and though the broken wave shivered before it dashed against the surface of the reef, still to keep his footing was more than Joshua could do.

Twice the wash of the waves carried his feet from under him; but each time he clung with bleeding hands to the rock, and held on like a limpet till the wave had passed and he was able again to struggle on.

Had the young Squire recovered strength and consciousness he might in a few seconds have crawled far enough to be out of all danger of being

carried back to the weather-side of the reef, even if he felt himself too weak to swim to the boat through the troubled water on the lee-side. But Oswald Pentreath had never seen the boat. The wave which drove him on the top of the rock seemed to have dashed the life out of him; and there he lay, with the spray dashing over him, but out of reach of all but the largest waves.

Joshua was close to him; but the time for the big waves had come again. Before Joshua could reach him, the first of those giant masses of water struck on the rock to windward of him. It came to the rock a huge green mountain; it struck and curled over into a mass of foam, which dashed up against the young Squire. It was not strong enough to carry him over, but it was just strong enough for the reflux to carry him back. And now his doom must have been fixed had not Joshua struggled through the spray just in time. It was pull, wave; pull, Joshua: but Joshua was the stronger. In a moment he had Oswald over the ridge of the reef, and safe on the lee-side.

Joshua hailed the men in the dingey—who, while

watching the scene, had drifted away—to pull close in and stand by, to pick Oswald and him up, intending to plunge in with the still inanimate Squire; but the next wave saved him the trouble, sweeping them both off the rock and almost against the boat. A few seconds more and the skipper and his mate hauled their master over the gunwale, and assisted Joshua to clamber in after him. Ten minutes more, and the heavily-laden dingey ran in upon the sandy shore, amidst the loud hurrahs of the little populace of fishermen's wives and children gathered to watch the struggle.

Joshua came on shore, carrying his burden with him. He made nothing of the Squire's young figure, though Oswald Pentreath was no feather-weight.

'Tell Mrs. Jakes to get a blazing fire,' cried Joshua as he went slowly towards the Ring of Bells; 'or, on second thoughts, I'll take him to my own house. There's more comfort there, a clean bed, and my sister Judith, who's as good as a doctor. Lend a hand one of you, and we'll get him up street in no time.'

Mr. Haggard's house was at the beginning of

the High-street, the one single street of Combhaven, and was not more than five minutes' walk from the Ring of Bells. Half a dozen men ran forward to help the minister with his burden, but he bade the youngest of the group take Mr. Pentreath's feet, while he held him by his shoulders, and the two carried him thus easily round the point, across the little sandy bay, and into the street, at the corner of which, with one side to the sea, stood Joshua Haggard's house—a square stone cottage, with a shop built out at one side, and a couple of extra rooms on the other, making it altogether a building of some importance. There was a good garden of the old-fashioned utilitarian type, and behind the garden an orchard, on the steep slope of one of those hills which sheltered Combhaven from wind and weather. There was a stable adjacent to the house, in which the minister kept his gray cob, a useful animal, which carried Joshua or the groceries with perfect equanimity.

Architecturally Mr. Haggard's dwelling-place had no claim to be admired. Not easy were it to imagine a building more commonplace, or one in which

the useful more completely predominated over the ornamental. But in this fertile Devonian land there is a wealth of colour everywhere, which renders the meanest things lovely, and on a sunny day Joshua's house and garden would have made a study for a Turner or a Millais. There is also, happily for the lowly-minded, a beauty in neatness and perfect order which comes home to every mind, and in this kind of beauty Joshua's home was rich. The stainless floors, the spotless walls, the shining old furniture, transparent window-panes, china bowls of sweet-scented flowers, bright brass-fenders and fire-irons, the freshness and sweetness that pervaded all things might have charmed the inhabitant of a palace. The kitchen with its gleaming array of copper saucepans and brazen pipkins, polished industriously every week, but kept more for show than use; and the parlour with its brass-handled bureaus, wide-backed chairs with broad horsehair seats, fluted legs, and an unknown coat of arms painted on their polished panels, recalled the rich umber shadows and mellow lights of an old Dutch picture. The broad sanded passage with low ceiling, panelled walls, and vista of garden

through the open door at the end, made a delicious bit of perspective. The best parlour was a temple of coolness and repose, odorous with dried rose-leaves, spices, and lavender—a room in which to slumber luxuriously on warm Sunday afternoons, the world forgetting, and most assuredly forgotten by the world.

Judith Haggard flew to the door as the little crowd entered at the green wooden gate which divided the narrow strip of front-garden from the street.

‘Why, what’s happened, Joshua?’ she cried, affrighted at that lifeless burden.

She was briefly told the state of the case.

‘There’s a good fire in the kitchen,’ she cried; ‘carry him in. Naomi, run and help Sally down with the mattress off the spare bed, and a blanket or two, and a pillow to lay under him. Why, Joshua, you’ve been in the water too.’

‘Yes, Judith, by God’s grace I was privileged to save him.’

‘Humph,’ muttered his sister doubtfully, ‘I wish you’d ha’ saved a better man than any of old Pen-treath’s breed.’

The old Squire kept himself close within his own domain, never went to church, and gave nothing to the poor; whereby Combhaven held him in awe as a limb of Satan, who would hardly require Christian burial with bell and book, but would be assuredly carried away bodily by his master when the predestined hour came.

It was a dim tradition in Combhaven that the Squire in his early manhood had been a republican and a Wilkite, had rioted and blasphemed with the wild monks of Medmenham, and that the gripping and pinching of his old age were intended to balance the waste and profusion of his youth. There was a slight anachronism here, for the Squire was not old enough to have known John Wilkes in his glory. But the fact remained that old Mr. Pentreath's youth had been wild and wicked. He had squandered his substance upon dissipations which the Combhaven people hinted at darkly, as something not to be openly expressed, like the vices of Commodus or Elagabalus—horrors to be shrouded in one of the dead languages, or communicated dumbly by nods and shrugs and significant pursings up of the

lips. He had raised money on mortgage, and wasted it on midnight orgies, in drink, in play; and the slow laborious money-scraping of his later years had been in somewise necessary. Twenty years ago he must have been a poor man, said Combhaven, with the certainty which springs from a careful study of our neighbours' business; but the mortgages were paid off about that time, and the intervening twenty years must have made the Squire rich. A man who owns over seven hundred acres of cultivated land, and who neither spends nor gives, must needs become the Cræsus of his narrow sphere. Combhaven could imagine no wealthier miser than its Squire, and they resented his miserly temper as a public wrong.

But although Miss Judith Haggard looked somewhat contemptuously upon the lifeless figure lying face-downward on one of her best mattresses, she set to work none the less vigorously to expedite Oswald Pentreath's return to life. She rubbed him, she shook him, she punched him in the back, and made returning animation such a severe ordeal that the struggling soul, feeling its husk of clay so

roughly handled, might naturally entreat to be allowed to stay in Hades.

Judith, however, without having the printed instructions of the Humane Society to guide her, evidently knew her business, and did it so well that, when she had made her patient disgorge all the sea-water he had swallowed, and had dragged him into a half-sitting position with his head upon her knee, her labours were crowned with success. The heavy eyelids slowly raised themselves, the dark gray eyes looked round the circle of eager faces with a gaze of vague inquiry, a shuddering sigh broke from the parted lips.

‘The Lord be praised!’ exclaimed Joshua solemnly.

‘It’s taken twenty minutes by grandmother’s clock,’ said Judith, glancing at that authority—an ancient eight-day timepiece in a mahogany case, crowned with three brass nobs—a clock that kept some mysterious record of the sun, moon, and stars, the months and weeks, and which had never been known to be correct within the memory of man.

There had been silence, save for furtive whisperings in the background, until now; but the opening of Oswald Pentreath's eyes seemed a signal for the loosening of every one else's tongue.

'Well, I'm glad he's come to,' said Jabez Long confidentially to his next neighbour and favourite chum, Michael Durran; 'but I'd leaver the minister saved him nor me.'

'Why's that, mate?'

'Don't 'ee know?'

'No.'

'Why, I thought you was too good a sayman not to know *that*.'

'What, lad?'

'Why, as no good never come o' reskying a drowning man. You fetches him out of the water at the risk of your own life, don't 'ee? Yes, and that there man's bound to do 'ee a hinjury. He can't help it. Why, mate, arn't it a common saying all along this 'ere coast—

"Save a stranger from the sea
And he'll turn your enemy"?

The deepest wrong as the minister ever had done

agen him will be done by that young man. Them as lives to see it may remember my words.'

He had raised his voice in his excitement, and his speech had been audible to Joshua standing in front of him.

'I knew you were an ignorant man, Long,' said Joshua, turning sharply upon the guileless fisherman; 'but I didn't think you were a fool into the bargain.'

'It's trew as the tides and the mune, Muster Haggard. You beware o' that young 'un. He's bound to be your foe.'

'Because I have done him the greatest service one man can do another? Nonsense, man. I'm ashamed of such folly.'

'Them as knows the say knows it for truth,' said Long doggedly.

'Come, my friends,' said Joshua, too contemptuous of such foolishness to argue further; 'Mr. Pentreath is all right, you see; so you may as well clear out of this, and let us make him as comfortable as we can. The more air we give him the better.'

'And you've got your own clothes to change yet,

Joshua,' said Judith. 'If you're not in for the rheumatics after this, I shall be surprised. A man had need be careful when he has seen the last of his five-and-fortieth birthday.'

The fishermen slowly withdrew, and the young Squire was left with Judith and her brother. Naomi Haggard and Sally the servant-girl had been banished from the kitchen during the process of resuscitation, and were waiting outside in the passage, breathless with expectation, Naomi trembling a little and holding Sally's stalwart arm.

'Let go, please, miss; you be a pinching of me,' remonstrated Sally at last as the grip tightened.

'I beg your pardon, Sally, I'm so anxious.'

'No call to be anxious, miss. He's drownded and dead, poor young man; and missus is wasting her trouble. Did you see how blue his lips was? purplish, like my Sunday frock.'

'O, Sally, I hope he is not dead!'

'Lor', miss, it ain't much odds. Them was never no good, they Pentreaths.'

The fishermen had gone out by a door that opened from kitchen to garden, so Naomi and the maid-

servant remained in ignorance of the patient's progress under aunt Judith's ministrations. Naomi had been much too well brought up to think of opening the kitchen-door, were it ever so narrow a chink, after she had been told to keep her distance. There was love, doubtless, in Mr. Haggard's household ; but the love was in somewise a latent element, and the more ostensible ruler was fear. From their babyhood upwards Naomi and James Haggard had regarded their father as the one awful power in this world. They were fond of him and proud of him, but with a far-off affection and a reverential pride which admitted of no familiarity. They had never clambered on his knees, or rifled his coat-pockets. The nearest approach to making him a playfellow had been to stand by his chair on a Sunday afternoon, between dinner-time and chapel, and hear him relate the story of Joseph and his brethren, or of those never-to-be-forgotten children who made a mock of the prophet's bald head, in his deep full voice, which gave additional solemnity even to the language of the Bible.

While Naomi and Sarah were straining their ears

to catch any sound that might penetrate the stout oaken door—a vain effort—the door suddenly opened, and Joshua appeared, supporting a curiously muffled figure in his arms. It was Oswald Pentreath wrapped in a couple of blankets.

‘Light a fire in the spare room, Sally,’ cried Judith, as the girl ran off to the wood-house, while Joshua half carried, half led, the young Squire upstairs. Not often was Mr. Haggard’s spare room occupied by a visitor, and he might as well have used that extra chamber for his own comfort, as a study or book-room. But in Judith’s opinion it was the right thing in a respectable house to have a spare bedroom, and it was her pride to maintain that apartment in perfect order, and in a certain kind of splendour, even at some sacrifice of the inhabited rooms. Thus, while Joshua’s four-poster was of painted deal, with washed-out chintz curtains and a coarse knotted coverlet, the spare bed had curly posts and an elaborate cornice, with a good deal of white fringe and dimity festooning, watch-pockets of silken patchwork, and a counterpane of the same industrious work, a little faded, but gorgeous still,

with memorials of dead-and-gone brocades and satins, choice morsels which Miss Patterson, the Barnstaple dressmaker, had bestowed upon Mrs. Martha Haggard, her first cousin. The dressing-table in the spare room was an elaborate piece of furniture, with numerous drawers, an oval looking-glass, and faint traces of departed gilding on its pale green paint—a dressing-table which had evidently adorned a grander room in its time. The bedside carpets were Brussels instead of Dutch, bordered and fringed by Judith's own hands; the pierced brass fender and brass-handled fire-irons were objects of admiration with all Judith's female acquaintance who came to the spare room to take off their bonnets at ceremonious tea-drinkings or social stepping-in for the afternoon. There were Swansea china teacups and saucers, the relics of an old set, on the narrow mantelpiece, and oval gems of art in tent-stitch on the wall—Adam and Eve in the Garden, and the meeting of Isaac and Rebecca.

In this chamber Mr. Pentreath was made to lie down, wrapped to suffocation in blankets, made still warmer by the administration of hot brandy-and-

water, and bidden to sleep. His clothes should be dried and brought to him, he was told, before dark that evening; and a messenger should be sent to his father announcing the fact of his safety; to which the young Squire replied drowsily that they need take no such trouble—his father would not be uneasy about him.

‘I’m sorry for the Dolphin,’ he said; ‘and I think I might as well have gone down in her while I was about it;’ for which speech Mr. Haggard reproved him gravely.

‘I hope you wouldn’t say such a thing if you had quite come to your right senses, Mr. Pentreath,’ he said.

‘Why, what have I to live for, do you think, that I should be overfond of life?’ returned the young Squire carelessly.

‘We can all make our lives good to ourselves and to others, if we set about it the right way, and seek the right direction,’ answered Joshua.

‘Ah, you mean by preaching and praying. That’s out of my line.’

‘I’ll come and talk to you when you have slept,’

said Joshua, shocked at this reprobate speech ; ' and I'll say a short prayer before I leave you.'

The minister knelt beside the bed, and lifted up his voice in one of those supplications which he knew so well how to make impressive. Oswald opened his heavy eyelids and watched the uplifted face on a level with his own, shining with the faith of an enthusiast. He thought more of the man, perhaps, than of the prayer for ' this sinner wandering darkly,' but he was impressed. He had thought of Joshua Haggard hitherto as a smooth-tongued canting rascal, who improved his business prospects by an affectation of sanctity. Brought for the first time in his life face to face with the man, he was moved to wonder at and even to respect him.

Having said his prayer, Joshua went to change his clothes, which had dried upon him ; and when this was done it was tea-time, and the little family assembled, according to their custom from year's end to year's end, at the parlour-table, where aunt Judith in her afternoon cap and gown sat before the mahogany tea-board, and poured out the tea from a flowered china teapot, squat and square, which dis-

pensed a mild and unexciting liquor of uniform strength and colour. It is not to be supposed that Mr. Haggard's household lacked that evidence of respectability, a silver teapot. Aunt Judith had a whole boxful of good old silver, wrapped in baize, and safely bestowed under her bed, from which retreat the family treasures only emerged on solemn and festive occasions.

That afternoon gathering in Joshua Haggard's parlour was apt to be rather a dull business. Judith had gone through life with a fixed idea that cheerfulness and laughter, and all youthful trifling and unmeaning gaiety, were so many snares and pitfalls set by the indefatigable enemy of mankind. She was happily exempt herself from these weaknesses; rarely smiled, save with the set smile she kept for after-chapel greetings and formal tea-parties; and suspected some evil in every unconsidered outbreak of gaiety in the young people of her acquaintance. Judicious training and seasonable reproof—seasonable in this case meaning at all times and seasons—had made Naomi almost as serious as her aunt; but the boy James was his sister's junior by four years,

and not so easily tamed. Naomi saw very little in life to move her to smiles or gladness; James had his joke with every truant and scamp in Combhaven. James was often late for tea, and brought discredit upon poor hard-working Sally by his dirty boots, which left their track along the sanded passage and across the red-brick floor of the kitchen.

‘Hearthstoning and cleanliness are thrown away where James is,’ aunt Judith used to remark vindictively.

They had taken their seats at the tea-table this afternoon, when Joshua came down in his good black clothes and fresh cambric neckcloth, looking like a bishop, Judith thought, as she eyed him admiringly. Her brother was the one object of Judith’s reverence and love. She was not demonstrative, and rarely gratified or plagued him by any expression of her affection; but from her childhood upwards she had worshipped him, toiled for him, and believed in him, with a single-minded devotion which is given to few brothers. This affection, like most intense feeling in this world, was not without its alloy of jealousy. Judith liked, nay expected, to be first in her bro-

ther's regard, to receive his warmest praises, and to stand nearest him at all times. She would have been wounded if she had thought his own children could be as dear to him as she was.

It may be that Joshua's departed wife, laid at rest under the daisies in the parish churchyard ten years ago, had languished somewhat in the shadow of the domestic hearth, obscured by the more important figure of her sister-in-law. But if it were so, it is certain that Mrs. Haggard had never complained. She had honoured and loved her husband, had praised his virtues, and been full of gratitude for the grave tenderness which sheltered and fenced in her innocent uneventful life. She had come into his house meekly and quietly, and she faded out of his life as calmly as she had entered it; and no outbreak of jealousy, no desire to be paramount, had ever kindled the fatal spark of domestic warfare.

'She was a poor, harmless creature,' said Judith, in bland approval, 'and she did her duty by my brother. I won't deny that I always wondered what Joshua could see to admire in her; but the more

mind a man has the easier his fancy is satisfied, and one doll's face seems to do as well as another, if it's only pink and white enough.'

The pinkness and whiteness which in Judith's opinion had constituted Mrs. Haggard's chief attraction in the eye of her husband had not been transmitted to Mrs. Haggard's daughter. Naomi had her father's olive skin, black hair, strongly-marked brows, and dark eyes. She was a girl about whom opinion varied. Some people in Combhaven called her plain, for lack of that pinkness and whiteness which were essential to the Combhaven notion of beauty; but drape that tall slim figure in Cleopatra's flowing robe, put a fillet of gold round that smooth raven hair and low broad brow, and you would have as noble an image of the daughter of the Ptolomies as ever shone on the painter's canvas or glorified the poet's page. But Combhaven had not awakened to the Cleopatra type of beauty, and was wont to speak of Naomi Haggard with a patronising pity, as a young woman who ought to have been much more personable, having had such a pretty mother.

'Father,' began Naomi gravely, when Joshua had

taken his seat, and his cup and saucer had been handed to him, 'was not your life in danger while you were saving Mr. Pentreath?'

'My life was in the keeping of my Master, Naomi, just as much then as it is now.'

'What, when you were sliding about on that slippery rock?' asked James, who had a matter-of-fact mind, and who had just come back from a business journey to a distant farmhouse in time to hear of his father's heroism.

'I was as safe as Daniel in the lions' den, or as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace,' answered Joshua.

'I don't know about that,' said James argumentatively. James would have argued with an archbishop. 'I wouldn't trust myself among hungry lions on the strength of Daniel's coming off so easy, if I was you. Look at the early Christians in the Roman amphitheatre; *they* weren't Danieled; they were eaten up body and bones.'

'How often must I tell you, James, that such arguments are irreverent?' asked the father reprov-
ingly.

Naomi took up her father's strong broad hand and kissed it.

'How good you are, father! how brave, how unselfish!' she said, with a little gush of feeling. 'All those fishermen standing by, and only you, a landsman, ready to help that drowning man.'

'My dear, I had but to set the example, and those poor men were as ready as I. They were sluggish-minded rather than cowardly; slow to perceive the call of duty, but not unwilling to encounter peril. As for being a landsman, I was almost as much on sea as on land when I was a boy.'

'You were nearly as bad as James for idling about in any bit of a boat when you ought to have been minding your business ashore,' said aunt Judith; 'and that's saying a good deal.'

'I love the sea,' cried Naomi. 'The first thing I can remember is the water rolling up over my feet, and the smell of the seaweed, and slippery green rocks, and the roaring tide. I'm very fond of the country, with its woods and hills and deep green hollows, where the ground is like a carpet of primroses in April, and Matherly Common all ablaze

with furze ; but lovely as it all is, the sea's best. It seems somehow as if the sea's alive, and the land dumb and dead.'

'I suppose you'd have been just as fond of the sea if it had swallowed up your father to-day,' remarked Judith sharply. Perhaps she resented that little burst of affection with which Naomi had rewarded her father's prowess. The girl was not often so demonstrative.

'O, aunt,' cried Naomi reproachfully, 'do you think I could have ever looked at the sea without agony if it had killed my father?'

'I don't know, I'm sure,' replied her aunt. 'When young women are as fanciful as you are, there's no reckoning upon 'em.'

Joshua's dark eyes contemplated his daughter with grave disapproval.

'Fanciful,' he repeated. 'I hope no one is fanciful in my family. My children have been brought up to be sober-minded, and steadfast to the right.'

'I wish we had been brought up to have more variety at meals,' said Jim, taking the impression of a fine set of teeth on his fourth slice of bread-and-

butter. 'Green-meat is very well in its way, but bread-and-butter and green stuff every afternoon is rather too much of a good thing. I feel as if I was making a Nebuchadnezzar of myself before the summer is over.'

'Lettuces are good for your blood, boy,' said Judith.

'As wholesome for your body as the sensual desire for dainty food is hurtful to your soul,' added his father.

'Are shrimps sinful, father?' inquired the undaunted Jim, 'because they're only fourpence a quart this afternoon, and there's a good deal of sinfulness of that kind going on up street.'

'If you hadn't grumbled, I might have given you shrimps for tea to-morrow,' said Judith; 'but after your wicked murmurings I shall do nothing of the kind.'

James made a wry face behind his bread-and-butter. He had not much faith in these frustrated good intentions of his aunt Judith's.

'She's always meaning and unmeaning,' he used to say. 'If she really meant to give us anything

nice, she'd do it, once in a way, instead of telling us how she was going to do it if we hadn't offended her.'

When the teacups were empty, and Jim had reduced the stack of substantial bread-and-butter to nothingness, Joshua improved the occasion by a homily, in which he held up to his son the picture of his young infirmities as in a mirror. He took for his text the wise man's saying, that 'a contented mind is a perpetual feast.' He set forth the sin of gluttony, the love of savoury meats, which lost Esau his inheritance and his father's blessing; and then he broke into a rhapsody on the duty of thankfulness, the freewill offering of praise and thanksgiving to an all-beneficent Creator.

There was real eloquence in his discourse, but it fell on somewhat stony ground with James, for whom such exhortations may have lost some of their power to move from frequency of application.

'All this fuss about a plate of shrimps,' thought Jim; and he wished that his lines had been cast in another place than beneath the roof-tree of a disciple of Whitfield and Wesley.

CHAPTER II.

THE FAMILY CIRCLE.

OSWALD PENTREATH slept the sleep of exhaustion in the stillness of the spare chamber. Judith had lowered the blind and drawn the dimity curtains, and there was obscurity as of summer twilight in the lavender-scented room. But when Oswald opened his eyes it was twilight without as well as within, and he had hardly light enough for the process of dressing in the garments that had been placed ready for him—Joshua's clothes for the most part, his own not being dry enough to put on just yet.

He plunged his face and head in a basin of spring water, and made himself as decent a figure as he could in the minister's clothes, which were much too wide for his slender frame. He was dizzy still from the buffeting the wind and waves had given him, a little dazed and uncertain as to the details of his misfortune ; but conscious that Joshua

Haggard had saved him from drowning, and that the Dolphin was lost.

‘Poor little boat,’ he said to himself sorrowfully. ‘It will be a long day before I get another. Poor little leaky Dolphin, my happiest days have been spent aboard her.’

The house was very quiet when he went downstairs presently, shyly, as in a strange place where he was not quite sure of being welcome. Even the man who had saved his life might consider him something of an intruder now the peril was past. He went softly down the dusky staircase, and in the passage paused and looked about him, uncertain which room to enter. There was a door on each side of the passage; that on the left stood a little way ajar, so he pushed it gently open and looked in, expecting to find the minister and his family assembled there in the gloaming.

It was the hour for the closing of the shop, and Joshua and his sister were both engaged. People in Comhaven had a trick of running in for some indispensable article just before the shutters were put up, and this vesper hour was sometimes the

busiest time of the day—a period which taxed the united energies of Mr. Haggard, his shopman, and his sister. For some reason of his own, Joshua had kept his daughter out of the business—an indulgence which had been a stumbling-block to Judith.

‘I daresay she’d be more worry than help for the first year or so,’ remarked Judith, ‘and I should have my work cut out to teach her the business; but I don’t hold with bringing a young woman up in idleness.’

‘God forbid she should be idle,’ replied Joshua; ‘but you can find her plenty of work to do in the house, I should think, without bringing her behind the counter for every young man in Combhaven to scrape acquaintance with her, on pretence of buying half a quire of letter-paper or a stick of sealing-wax.’

‘Bless me,’ cried Judith, ‘I didn’t know we had such a beauty in the family to bring the young men after her.’

‘I said nothing about beauty, Judith,’ answered Joshua in his grave reproving tones.

‘I was in the shop when I was sixteen,’ said Judith; ‘but I’m thankful to say I knew how to

keep the men at a distance as soon as I knew how to weigh an ounce of tea. However, if you've your fancies about Naomi, I should be the last to interfere.'

'I have no fancies,' replied the imperturbable Joshua; 'but I don't mean Naomi to be in the business.'

'And when I'm in my grave the shop may go to ruin, I suppose,' said Judith.

'I see no occasion for that. Jim will inherit the business, and I hope he may have a clever industrious wife to help him—as you have helped me, Judith,' added the minister in a propitiatory tone.

'Her cleverness and industry put together won't be much use to Jim, unless she's been brought up in the grocery line and knows the substance of calico and printed goods,' answered Judith decisively.

'Then let us hope that Providence will give Jim a general-dealer's daughter for his wife,' replied Joshua.

There the discussion terminated; but it left a lurking resentment in Judith's mind at the idea that her brother was making a lady of his daughter. These holy women of the last generation were apt to

look with a jealous eye upon any aspiring tendencies in their nieces. What was good enough for them, they argued with a show of reason, ought to be good enough for those that came after them. There was a strong Conservative element in the Combhaven mind fifty years ago, and Conservatism at Combhaven meant stagnation.

Oswald Pentreath looked into the twilit parlour, and beheld nothing to increase his shyness. A girl, tall and slim, dark-haired and dark-browed, stood by the open window looking listlessly out at the village street, across a row of stocks and mignonette, which adorned the window-sill. A boy of fifteen or so sat astride his chair, and lolled over a slate, with his elbows on the table.

'Nine into seventy-four will go—come it must go six times anyhow—*that* can't be a tight fit—' muttered this youthful student; 'perhaps it might go seven times—nine into seventy. There's seven tens in seventy by the by, and one off each of 'em brings seven nines down to sixty-three—and put on another nine brings it up to seventy-two—why that's

eight nines, and two over. I hope the man who invented arithmetic came to a bad end; don't you, Naomi?'

'Why, Jim?' asked Naomi absently.

'Just think of the misery he brought upon mankind. If there was no arithmetic, there'd be no ledgers and daybooks; and if there were no tradesmen's books, nobody could get into debt. That's number one. Then if there was no arithmetic there'd be no usury, for the money-lenders couldn't reckon up their interest. In my opinion, the man who invented figures did as much mischief as Eve when she ate the apple. Why, it was numbering the people that got David into trouble, if you remember. The Bible's dead against figures.'

'May I come in, please?' asked Oswald gently.

Young men brought up in remote villages fifty years ago were prone to shyness. They were not gifted with that placid assurance of their own acceptability, and that calm contempt for everybody else, by which the species is distinguished nowadays.

'O!' cried Naomi with a little start, 'it's Mr.

Pentreath. Come in, if you please, sir. Father will be so glad you're better.'

'Except for a headache, I feel as well as ever I felt in my life, Miss Haggard. But for your father I might be lying at the bottom of the sea. I want to thank him for his goodness.'

'I don't think father would like to be thanked,' said Naomi. 'He looks upon all that happened as the work of Providence; but if you wish to speak to him—' she went on, hesitating a little—'he'll be coming in to prayers and supper presently, and I've no doubt he'll be pleased to see you.'

Oswald went over to the window and looked at the stocks, and at the prospect, which afforded a peep at the bay, beyond the angle of a garden on the hill-side. Opposite the minister's house there was some open ground, with a running stream between two roads which made a fork at the entrance to the town. At the angle of the fork stood the chief inn of Combhaven, the First and Last, where the coaches stopped, and where any sojourner of distinction—a black swan which appeared about once in five years—was wont to take up his abode. This

hostelry was supposed to be the first house the traveller beheld on arriving at Combhaven, the last on which his longing eye lingered when departing.

Oswald looked at the glimpse of sea yonder, dim in the evening gray—the air was curiously calm and balmy after the tempest—and then his eyes wandered to the face on the other side of the window. It was not quite unfamiliar to him. He had met Naomi Haggard walking with her father and her brother many a time on summer Sunday evenings after chapel, and had admired the darkly handsome face in which Combhaven saw so little beauty. For Mr. Pentreath, Naomi's face had a greater interest than the fresh-complexioned buxom prettiness which prevailed among the daughters of the soil. This girl had a foreign look, he fancied, like a wanderer from a warmer brighter land; and he was not surprised to learn by and by that Joshua had Spanish blood in his veins, and that if destiny had not made him a disciple of Wesley, and a Quietist of the William Law pattern, he might have been a follower of Loyola in the land of his forefathers.

Sally came in presently with a pair of mould-

candles in tall brass candlesticks, and a snuffer-tray; and having set these on the sideboard, began to lay the cloth. Supper was a formal meal in the minister's household, though it consisted generally of bread-and-cheese, or at most a cold joint. A fragment of fruit-pie or pasty was a thing for Jim to rejoice about, so rarely were his sensual appetites so much indulged. In Joshua's creed temperance and sobriety meant a complete renunciation of the pleasures of the table. He ate just enough to maintain him in health and vigour, and his food was of the plainest. To murmur because a joint was overcooked or undercooked, tough or tasteless—to sigh for savoury sauces or appetising condiments—to eat for the mere gratification of the senses after absolute hunger was satisfied—would have been, in Joshua's eyes, an indulgence in the fleshy lusts, and a sinful unthankfulness for the blessing of plenty. All such weakness of the flesh came under the head of Esau's shameful barter. The big strong man, prosperous, secure of income, sat down to as plainly furnished a table as if he had been a convict on gaol allowance or a pauper in a workhouse. Judith fell easily into

her brother's way of thinking. He gratified his self-denial, she her economy, which was a virtue she carried to the verge of vice ; and every one except Jim was satisfied. There was plenty of this plain fare—no one need go hungry ; and the hirelings of the household, seeing that they came no worse off than that good man their master, were never known to murmur.

Naomi and Mr. Pentreath contemplated the stocks and mignonette in silence, while Sally set the big home-baked loaf and liberal wedge of cheese on the table. They were silent simply because they had nothing to say to each other. They could not burst into lively conversation about the Royal Academy, or the evening parades at the Botanical, the school of cookery, or the last new skating-rink, like a young man and woman of the present day. They could not talk about hunting, for Naomi had never been on horseback in her life ; or of theatres, for she hardly knew the meaning of the word ; or of books, for their reading, limited in each case, lay so far apart.

James, who was not given to shyness, came to

their relief just as the silence was growing oppressive. He had finished his sum to his own satisfaction, though whether the results he had arrived at would satisfy his father was an open question.

'I'm sorry you've lost the Dolphin,' he began, swaggering across to the window with his hands in his trousers-pockets; 'she was a smart little craft. I've often wished myself aboard her.'

'She was the best I could get,' answered Oswald.

'Ah, but now you'll be getting a better one, I'll warrant.'

'Not much chance of that. I had hard work to get that one.'

'What a shame! and the Squire so rich. He is rich, isn't he?'

'Jim!' cried Naomi reproachfully.

'I have never asked him the question,' replied Oswald. 'It suits his humour to call himself poor; and whether the poverty is real or imaginary, I have to bear the brunt of it. It drove Arnold off to sea, but I suppose I haven't as much spirit as my brother. I dawdle about here, and contrive to rub on somehow.'

This was quite a burst of confidence for Oswald Pentreath, who rarely opened his mind to any one in Combhaven. He lived like some small mediæval lord among his vassals, and only conversed with them upon the indispensable questions of daily life.

Naomi looked up at him earnestly, full of sympathy and wonder. 'Wouldn't you like to be a soldier or a sailor?' she asked.

'I have never felt myself tempted that way.'

'I think I should, if I were a man. I should be so tired of Combhaven—'

'It isn't the liveliest place in the world certainly—out of the hunting season.'

'And I should so long to go far away into strange countries—to India, for instance.'

'To die among cobras and blackamoors,' said Oswald.

'Father has read to us about the missionaries in India. I should like to be a female missionary.'

'And to be strangled by a Thug, or eaten by some backsliding cannibal, or to be buried up to your neck in the burning sand and have a litany said over you preparatory to being sacrificed to some of

their murderous gods,' said Oswald. 'What a destiny for a young woman to sigh for!'

'I might do those poor heathens some good; and I should see the palm-trees, and the mountains that touch the sky, and the temples, and elephants, and jungles, and palanquins.'

'And tigers, and rattlesnakes, and mosquitoes, and upas-trees,' added Jim. 'What a mixture! I should have thought you had enough preaching at home, Naomi, without wanting to go and preach to the blackamoors.'

Naomi sighed. She was a young woman of energetic temperament, and her energies were beginning to feel cramped by the narrow bounds of Combhaven. The events of to-day had perhaps unduly excited her, and she was inclined to speak of half-formed dreams and hopes that she would have shrunk from telling in a calmer mood.

'There can never be too much of what is really good,' she said, with a reproving look at Jim.

Joshua and his sister came in at this moment, their evening labour finished. Oswald went straight up to his preserver, and shook him by the hand.

‘I feel how much I owe you, Mr. Haggard,’ he said. ‘I only wish you had saved a better life, or that I had better opportunities for proving my gratitude.’

‘I desire no gratitude, Mr. Pentreath, for I did no more than my bounden duty; but if you’ll try to prove that I saved a good life, and not a bad one, I shall be doubly rewarded.’

‘Ah!’ sighed Oswald, ‘I’m afraid your idea of a good life and mine would never match. I don’t think I’ve any particular leaning to wickedness, but I don’t feel any strong pull the other way.’

‘Without that strong pull, as you call it, Mr. Pentreath, there is not much chance for a man.’

‘I’m not going to intrude upon you any longer, Mr. Haggard, if you’ll allow me to take my borrowed clothes home with me. I’ll see they’re sent back to-morrow morning.’

‘You are heartily welcome.’

‘And they’re a suit he’s left off wearing,’ said Judith, ‘so you needn’t make yourself unhappy about them. But I always mend ’em and put ’em away tidy. What’s worth keeping at all is worth keeping decently. That’s my idea.’

'Good-night, Mr. Haggard,' said Oswald, holding out his hand again.

'Nay, you'll not leave us till you've eaten a bit of supper,' remonstrated Judith, who, despite her dislike to the name of Pentreath, objected to see this young man depart hungry. 'Our table's about the plainest in Combhaven, I daresay; but what we have is good; and if it's not what you are accustomed to at home—'

'We are no epicures at the Grange, Miss Haggard,' replied Oswald, 'and I shall be glad to take a crust of bread-and-cheese with you before I go.'

Oswald did not know that by this acceptance of hospitality he had involved himself in the minister's evening prayer, and was a little surprised to see the shopman, the errand-boy, and the maid-of-all-work come in and take their seats against the parlour-wall, with solemn countenances and newly-washed hands, while Joshua stood up, with his pocket Bible open in his hand, looking through the pages thoughtfully, as if seeking an appropriate chapter for the evening's meditation.

He began with the thirtieth psalm: 'I will extol Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me'—a cry of a grateful sinner, trustful, and even glad, yet with deepest sense of his feebleness. And then he went on to the thirty-third: 'Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous, for praise is comely for the upright.' And when he had read these he preached a short sermon, taking the Christian's duty of gratitude for his text; and without being absolutely personal, reminded Oswald how deep a debt he owed his Creator and Preserver for the work of this day.

Oswald was impressed by the simple pathos, the unaffected power, of the speaker. Not actively irreligious at any time, but inclined to ridicule the fervid piety of Dissenters, the young Squire was to-night more open than usual to good impressions. He was really grateful to Joshua, and in a secondary manner, as to a remoter and less tangible benefactor, grateful to Providence for his rescue; and to-night he saw nothing absurd in these long prayers, this scripture-reading and commentary. It lasted for nearly an hour; and the clock was striking ten when the family

and their guest sat down to supper—the shopman at his master's table, the servant-girl and errand-boy at a smaller table by the door—a curiously primitive arrangement, at which the young Squire smiled, and of which Naomi felt ashamed this evening for the first time.

Mr. Pentreath, who had eaten nothing since he breakfasted at Clovelly, did ample justice to the simple fare, praised the home-baked bread and the home-brewed ale, much to the satisfaction of Judith Haggard, who was chief agent in the manufacture of both. Joshua was always cheerful and pleasant at supper-time. It was the one hour in which he unbent the bow. The duties of the day, spiritual and temporal, were done; he could afford to enjoy life's innocent pleasures. The society of his children, a little chat with Judith about the day's takings and the steady improvement of the business,—how quickly that last chest of tea was going off, and what a run there had been on Dutch cheeses and Manchester printed goods lately.

To-night Joshua avoided all business talk; he and Mr. Pentreath discussed the prospects of Comb-

haven, which was supposed to be making rapid strides in the march of improvement.

‘If anybody would work our mines, we might get on faster than we do,’ said Joshua; ‘but while there’s no trade in the place but fishing, and a little boat-building, we can’t expect much expansion. I sometimes wonder that the Squire does not work those old tin mines on Matcherly Common. The mines belong to him, I think.’

‘Yes; but in his opinion the lode is exhausted. He doesn’t care about risking his money,’ answered Oswald. ‘If a company would take to the mines, I daresay he’d be very glad.’

‘But if the mines are exhausted a company would only lose money. It would be as bad for the shareholders as for your father.’

‘So it would,’ replied Oswald; ‘but I don’t suppose my father sees it in that light.’

Supper was over by this time, and the young man took his leave with reiterated thanks, and a shyly-expressed hope that his acquaintance with Mr. Haggard and his family might not end here.

‘I’m afraid there would be neither profit nor

pleasure to any of us in its continuance, Mr. Pen-treath,' answered Joshua. 'It's civil in you to wish it; but you see we are only tradespeople, in a humble way of life, and you are a gentleman's son, with large expectations. What can there be in common between us?'

'Friendship,' said Oswald boldly. 'I don't think that is measured by social standing. If I can respect a man, he is more than my equal, for I should hardly do that unless I thought him better than myself; and I do most assuredly respect you, Mr. Haggard.'

'You are free and welcome to come here whenever you please,' answered Joshua. 'I'm not going to shut my door in your face. But I'm afraid if you were known to come often, Combhaven would begin to talk about it, and say you were forgetting yourself.'

'A fig for Combhaven and its petty distinctions. I have not so many friends in this God-forsaken place that I can afford to sacrifice a good one.'

'God-forsaken!' repeated Joshua, horrified. 'Do you think for a moment that we are farther from

His care because we live in one of the quiet corners of His earth ?

‘O, of course not. It’s only a way of speaking. Once more good-night. I shall tell my father how much I owe you ; and I shall drop in sometimes of an evening, Mr. Haggard, since you’ve promised not to shut your door against me.’

‘A very civil-spoken young man,’ said aunt Judith approvingly, directly Oswald was gone. ‘I shouldn’t have expected a Pentreath to be so mannerly, considering the way they’ve been brought up.
*
What do you think of him, Joshua?’

‘A good-natured youth, but a weak one. An ash sapling, to be bent by any wind ; not an oak, to stand firm against the storm.’

CHAPTER III.

FATHER AND SON.

IT was not a bright or cheerful home to which Oswald Pentreath returned that August evening, after eating his supper at Mr. Haggard's. Nay, it is possible that if he had not supped with the minister he might have gone supperless to bed, for it was no easy thing to get a meal at the Grange after nine o'clock.

The house stood midway between the hilly high-road from Rockmouth and the edge of the cliff, in grounds that were rather wilderness than park, save immediately in front of the house, so little being done to keep them in order. Beautiful exceedingly were those woods and gardens, nevertheless—lovely in their wildness and neglect: the blue sea shining through every break in the foliage; ferns and wild-flowers flourishing abundantly in the wild western climate; and a flush and glow of colour on all things.

The house was large and gloomy, and had been

lapsing to decay during the last forty years, in which period there had been scarcely forty pounds expended upon repairs or renovation. Happily the old oak panelling could be kept bright with labour, and that, to the extent of his opportunities, the Squire never spared. The meagrely-furnished rooms were in perfect order. The scanty draperies were free from accumulated dust or flue. The house was as clean as it was comfortless, save in that one sacred chamber, the Squire's study—a little room next the hall-door, a closet of espial, from which the Squire saw every one who entered or quitted the house. Here reigned dust and disorder; here the spider spun his web, and the moth deposited her eggs; here the half-starved beetle fled for refuge, and the famished mouse nibbled the wainscot. Only at long intervals, and after deliberate preparation, did the Squire permit this study to be cleaned. As a preliminary measure he cleared away and locked up every morsel of paper, every parchment, account or memorandum book. At other times he simply locked the door of the chamber on leaving it, and carried the key in his pocket.

Miserly as the arrangements of the household were, it was kept up with a faint simulation of a gentleman's establishment. There was an old man who was called the butler, who had an underfed boy, an orphan nephew of his own—no one else would have stayed—for his underling. There was a cook and housekeeper, who sent up fairly eatable dinners—the Squire rather leaning to a good dinner, on condition that he got it cheap. There was a middle-aged housemaid of severe aspect, who spent her days in cleaning the great desolate-looking rooms and rarely-trodden staircases, and who seemed from long habit to have grown fond of cleaning for its own sake, as men are fond of athletics. Out-of-doors there was a handy man, who looked after the horses and poultry, and did a little gardening in that cultivated portion of the grounds immediately surrounding the house, with the occasional assistance of a boy or a day-labourer. Out of this minimum household the Squire got the maximum of work, and perhaps there was no house within fifty miles better kept than the Grange, and no neater garden than the Dutch flower-beds, narrow paths, and quincunxes

in front of the Squire's study. Was not the master's eye upon the gardener, or the gardener's help, while he worked—an eye that threatened summary vengeance upon idlers?

The Squire looked out of his study as Nicholas the butler admitted Oswald at the hall-door. There was no gush of affection on the side of father or son, though the life of one of the two had been in mortal peril since they parted. Mr. Pentreath scrutinised his son through his spectacles, perhaps to make sure that he was sober.

'So you've lost your boat?' he remarked, after the scrutiny.

'Yes, father.'

'Unlucky—for you. You don't expect to get another, I suppose?'

'I never expect anything.'

'So much the better for you,' grunted the Squire. 'So it was the Methodist parson pulled you out of the water? Canting hound! I daresay he expected to get something by it.'

'I don't think he did,' answered the young man coolly. 'He knew I belonged to you.'

The father contemplated his son doubtfully for a few moments, but made no reply. He held one of the tall silver candlesticks in his hand as he stood on the threshold of his den. There was no other light in the hall. The oil lamp which hung from the ceiling had been extinguished at ten o'clock.

'You've had your supper, I suppose?' he inquired with paternal hospitality.

'Yes, father.'

'That's lucky for you. Nicholas cleared the table an hour ago. You'd better get to bed, and take a good night's rest.'

'Good-night, father.'

'Good-night. And don't stay out so late again, keeping Nicholas up, and wasting candle.'

'All right, father; it sha'n't occur again. A man doesn't escape from drowning every day in the year.'

Oswald took a chamber candle from the side-table in the hall and lighted it from the candle in his father's hand. Very dissimilar were the faces of the two men as they confronted each other across the flame. The younger face delicately chiselled, with

complexion inclining to pallor, dark gray eyes, wavy auburn hair—a face with something of womanly softness in its beauty, with a touch of melancholy too, as if it belonged to one who had little hopefulness. The Squire's was your true miser's face, pinched and hard. The eyes small, and set too near each other; the nose hooked and birdy; the thin lips inclining downward at the corners. Exposure to all kinds of weather had dried the Squire's skin like a russet-apple shrivelled by long keeping. The air which had given softness and delicacy to the son's complexion had tanned the father's to the semblance of leather. His lean jaws had a knack of working with a curious muscular motion, as if he were munching something or talking to himself, at odd times. They worked to-night as Oswald lighted his candle. It was a sign of displeasure on the Squire's part.

'I think I gave you fifty pounds towards that boat,' he said presently.

'We're neither of us likely to forget the circumstance, for it was the only fifty pounds you ever gave me in your life,' answered Oswald.

'Don't be insolent, sir. Fifty pounds—fifty

pounds gone to the bottom of the sea, through your folly and bad seamanship.'

'You needn't make yourself unhappy about that. The loss is mine.'

'No, sir, it is not,' answered the old man fiercely. 'The loss is mine. The money was mine—the fruit of my care and economy. The loss is mine. Fifty pounds—one quarter's rent of Withycomb Farm—gone for ever. Fifty pounds at compound interest—do you know what that would have been fifty years hence?'

'Haven't the least idea. As I never have had any principal, I can't be expected to know much about interest.'

'You're a fool!' exclaimed the Squire, turning on his heel. 'Go to bed before I lose my temper.'

Oswald went up-stairs without another word, glad to escape any further reproof. He had a bedchamber that was spacious, and to his mind sufficiently comfortable, though it would have seemed bare as a dungeon to the sybarite. The deep-set windows looked seaward; there was a four-post bedstead wide enough for four, with chintz curtains, faded and

attenuated by much washing; there was an old bookcase which contained Oswald's meagre collection—Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, Shelley, an odd volume of Wordsworth, a few of the classics, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Tom Jones*, *Roderick Random*, *The Adventures of a Guinea*, and three or four volumes of the *British Drama*. A carved-oak table at which he wrote, a dozen high-backed chairs more or less rotten, and a clumsy walnut-wood wardrobe made up the catalogue of furniture. Over the high chimney-piece hung the single picture of the room—a half-length portrait of Oswald Pentreath's mother, dead many years ago. The portrait had been painted before Mrs. Pentreath's marriage—an innocent girlish face, curiously like Oswald's in feature and expression; a girlish figure in a scanty white gown, with a lapful of flowers—one of those old-fashioned pictures which feebly recall the style of Reynolds and Gainsborough.

Oswald was tired, but in no humour for sleep. He had slept off his drowsiness in the minister's tranquil chamber, so he walked up and down the room thinking of the day's work, and wondering

whether his escape from the mighty jaws of the sea was a thing to rejoice about.

‘I suppose life is better than death,’ he said to himself; and then he involuntarily repeated those words which depicture humanity’s abhorrence of death:

‘To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot;
This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod.’

‘Yes, I suppose in the abstract life is better. If I only knew what to do with mine! Yet some people would tell me I am a man to be envied, having a father who scrapes and pinches and toils to enrich and extend an estate which in the course of nature must fall to me. Yes; but the course of nature is very slow in some cases. Heaven forbid that I should desire to see the old man’s life shortened by so much as an hour! but it’s a long vista to look at.’

The young man was up betimes next morning, and in the stable. Having lost his yacht, he had now only his horse to care about—a bony, long-legged, long-backed hunter, with ragged hips and an ugly head, but a good jumper, and with plenty of

go in him. The brute was not spoiled by over-feeding, but was gratified with a greater variety of food than usually falls to the lot of his species, the Squire expecting his stable to fatten upon the waste of his garden. In the apple season Herne the Hunter eat so many windfalls that he converted himself into a kind of animated cider-press.

He was an affectionate beast—licked his young master's face when they interchanged greetings, and would have followed him about like a dog, if allowed. Next to a sail in the Dolphin, Oswald loved a scamper across country on Herne the Hunter; up hill and down dale, reckless of the ground he went over, possessed with a conviction that Herne's experience and pluck would pull him through. There was no clear idea of the animal's age at the Grange. He had got beyond mark of mouth when the Squire bought him out of a stage-coach, whose proprietor disposed of him cheaply on account of a propensity to bolting, which had exercised a demoralising influence on the rest of the team. Oswald had ridden anything he could get to ride ever since he exchanged petticoats for trousers—from a Flemish plough-

horse to a thoroughbred colt ; and to Oswald, Herne the Hunter was a most delightful acquisition. He had every vice that a horse can have, linked with one virtue—he was a rusher across country. Oswald hunted him four days a week in winter, and rode or drove him every other day in summer, and the two were devoted to each other.

An ancient white pony, which the Squire drove himself in a shandrydan of the chaise tribe, completed the Pentreath stud ; and these two beasts inhabited stables designed for the accommodation of eight hunters and four carriage-horses. Mr. Pentreath had put pigs and oxen into several of the loose-boxes, and had converted one of the fine old coach-houses into a barn. The stable-yard was a stony wilderness, in which the poultry roamed in savage freedom. One small boy took care of the two horses, under the ubiquitous handy-man, and presented a curious picture of man's dominion over the brute creation when he was seen lugging that huge beast Herne out of the stable by a bridle, which the brat could hardly reach on tiptoe.

‘ Good old Herne,’ said Oswald, as the long-

legged animal stalked out into the yard, with his well-worn saddle; 'you'll have to carry me a little oftener, my steed, now I've lost the Dolphin.'

He swung himself lightly into the saddle, and rode out of the yard into the shrubbery on one side of the house—a jungle of laurel, arbutus, and bay, lying beyond that narrow region of Dutch garden, bowling-green, and *pleasaunce* which the Squire required to be kept in order. A bridle way through the shrubbery led into the park, which was much more like a wood than a park; and a dilapidated fence, with occasional yawning gaps in it, divided the park from the actual woodland, a long straggling stretch of ancient forest, which sheltered the Grange from north-east winds and wintry gales blowing across channel.

There are plenty of pleasant rides round about Combhaven, which settlement lies in a deep cleft between hills as picturesque as the Trossachs, though on a smaller scale than those Scottish mountains. Not having any particular purpose in this before-breakfast ride, Oswald let his horse go his own way, or fancied he did; and Herne's way was through

the hilly High-street, where, at half-past seven o'clock, the business of life was already in full swing.

The first house of any importance on the left hand of the street was Joshua Haggard's. How bright and fresh the plain square dwelling seemed to Oswald's eye, after the ruined majesty of the Grange! Every window was opened wide to the sweet morning air, spotless muslin curtains fluttered within, and between those snowy draperies Oswald caught a glimpse of a girl's dark head, bending over a row of flower-pots. Breakfast was over at Mr. Haggard's, and that spiritual light, Joshua himself, was to be seen in the orderly shop ministering to the temporal wants of his flock by packing a large parcel of groceries in stout brown paper, and seemingly as careful to make his package secure and compact as if he had been one of those pious Jews who, for pure love of the holy work, strove to reërect Solomon's Temple. Aunt Judith was busy in her own special department—the drapery business—sorting packets of hooks and pink papers of pins in various little wooden boxes and drawers, her forehead puckered into the frown of absorbed attention.

Oswald drew rein before the shop-door, much to the annoyance of Herne, who was apt to be cross-grained at starting, eager for the refreshment of a stretching gallop.

‘Good-morning, Mr. Haggard,’ cried the young man; ‘none the worse for your wetting yesterday, I trust.’

‘No, sir, thank you. I’m glad to see you abroad so early. You caught no cold, I hope?’

‘Thanks to Miss Haggard’s good nursing, none whatever. O, by the way, I have to thank you for sending round my clothes the first thing this morning. I told our boy to carry back the suit you so kindly lent me; but service at the Grange is rather slow.’

‘There’s no hurry, sir.’

There was a marked difference in manner between the minister of last night, anxious to exhort and even reprove, and the grocer of this morning. Joshua in his shop was the tradesman, deferential to the son of his patron and customer, Squire Pentreath. Not that the Squire was by any means a good customer. There were farmers’ households among the hills and valleys between Combhaven and Rockmouth that

consumed three times as much as Mr. Pentreath's shrunken establishment.

Oswald patted Herne's long neck, smoothed his disordered mane, and trifled with curb and snaffle for a few minutes, as if inclined to linger, yet hardly knowing what more to say. A nice-looking young fellow on horseback, even Judith was compelled to own; and Judith, dwelling among a Conservative people, was at heart an unconscious Radical. She derived her Radicalism from Jeremiah and Isaiah—by much dwelling upon those denunciatory passages in which the prophets scourge as with a whip of scorpions the sins and follies of earth's mighty ones—instead of taking the poison from Wilkes or Horne Tooke; but it was rank Radicalism all the same. She regarded the good old families, the patrician order of her neighbourhood, with a grudging mind and jaundiced eye. She had that mistaken and distorted pride which reckons superiority of education or position as an injury, or even an insult, to the more humbly placed. Yet looking askance at Oswald Pentreath this morning, while pretending to be deep in consideration of the little paper packets,

Judith confessed to herself that he was of a different breed from the young tradesmen and farmers' sons of the district. He was not handsomer or better built, healthier or stronger; he had only the superiority of grace and refinement, other looks, other tones and inflexions of voice—another way of holding himself. The difference was indefinable, but it was an all-pervading difference in form and expression.

The dark gray eyes with their auburn lashes, fair skin inclining to pallor, long nose slightly aquiline, thin lips close shaven, auburn whiskers, auburn hair, tall slight figure, might have recalled a portrait of that golden age for wit and beauty—and no other virtue under the sun—the reign of Charles the Second. There was all the grace and all the weakness which characterised the gilded youth of that era in Oswald Pentreath's appearance. Judith did not look deep enough for this, but she perceived a certain effeminacy which offended her, and she was not slow to express her opinion when Oswald had obliged Herne by proceeding up the street—a progress to which Herne imparted a good deal of unnecessary clattering of hoofs, and a rocking-horse movement

across the road highly alarming to the small children playing in the gutter.

'I hate a fop,' said Judith decisively, her approval of last night modified by her morning temper, which always inclined to acidity.

'I don't think young Pentreath deserves your dislike on that score,' answered Joshua, calmly pursuing his avocation behind the opposite counter; 'he doesn't wear fine clothes, and he has no expensive habits that ever I heard of.'

'For a good reason—he hasn't the money for either. But take my word for it, he'll dress himself out like a peacock, and spend his money like a lord, as soon as ever the old Squire is in his grave. I could see it all in the droop of his eyelids.'

'You must be a shrewder reader of character than I, Judith, to see so much in so little,' returned Joshua with his quiet smile—a smile that had a certain loftiness of expression, as if he surveyed Judith's womanly weaknesses from an altitude, as one looks down on the petty life of a village from the mighty solitude of a mountain-top; 'for my part I rather take to the young man.'

‘I don’t,’ protested Judith, shutting one of the little drawers with a slam. ‘He’s too pretty for my money. I never could abide a pretty man. I might have been married when I was seven-and-twenty, if I’d cared for prettiness. There was young Chandler, the miller’s son, with a complexion like a girl, and always on the simper, asked me times and often; but I used to come over as if I’d been eating too much treacle at the mere sight of him. His good looks made me bilious. What a life I should have led him, to be sure, if I had gone against my inside so far as to say yes!—a poor pink-and-white thing like that lolloping about the place, and making believe to be a man.’

‘Yet it was a strong-minded woman married him for all that, Judith.’

‘Very lucky for him. If he’d married a weak-minded one they’d have lost themselves and gone to sleep in the woods one day, and the robin redbreasts would have covered ’em up with leaves and made an end of ’em.’

CHAPTER IV.

WOOD AND WILDERNESS.

THE loss of the *Dolphin* weighed heavily upon Oswald Pentreath's spirits. His days seemed so much longer, his life altogether lost brightness and colour, now that he was without a yacht. Love of the sea was innate in him, and his happiest hours had been spent in cruising round the romantic coast of his native country, making a summer voyage to the wilder Cornish cliffs, where Tintagel's rocky but-tress breasts the angry winds, or even going as far afield as the Lizard or the Land's End.

The yacht being gone he felt his occupation gone with her, and for the first time in his life realised the fact that he was an idler. He had no profession, no hope of a career; he was absolutely without ambition. His future was marked out for him. In the fulness of time his father would drop into the grave, decaying as gradually as the great

elms in the park, which shed their rotten old limbs one by one till the hollow trunks stood up leafless and shorn, silvan images of the tenacity with which crippled age holds on to life. The Squire would die, and Pentreath would belong to Oswald — a goodly estate, improved by half a century of economy and good management. That was Oswald's future. There was not much love between father and son, and the young man's calculations were not troubled by any sentimental considerations. He was too good-natured to desire his father's death—he only told himself that it was an event which must happen in due course, and that it would change the colour of his own existence. By the time he was about forty he would most likely inherit the land, and then Arnold could cease those wanderings of his from sea to sea, and come back to his boyhood's home. They had been loving brothers in the days before Arnold, stung to the quick by the father's brutal punishment of some boyish offence, ran away to Bristol, and got himself a berth on a merchant ship bound for Bombay. Arnold's name had never crossed the Squire's lips since the day of his flight,

but the brothers had corresponded faithfully, and once in three or four months a letter from some foreign port informed Oswald of Arnold's wanderings. The boy had prospered, and at three-and-twenty the Squire's second son was first mate on board an East Indian clipper ship—a hard life, he told Oswald, but it suited him, and the owners would make him captain before he was six-and-twenty. He had saved one of their ships by his good seamanship, when her captain had been knocked on the head by a falling spar and lay powerless in his berth, and he stood high in favour with the firm. 'It's a better life than that you lead at the Grange, my dear boy,' wrote the sailor; 'but as you are to be commander there by and by, it's best you should stick to the ship. I see the world, men, and manners; while you might as well be one of the seven sleepers, for all you know of the changes and chances of this life. However, I fancy that sleepy kind of existence suits you. You always took things easier than I.'

Severance had done little to lessen affection, and Oswald's pleasantest fancy about the days when he

should be master was the thought of Arnold's return.

'I'll have the finest yacht between this and the Solent,' said Oswald, 'and Arnold shall be skipper. I'll give him a thousand a year, and when he marries he shall have the prettiest homestead on the estate, and fifty acres of pleasure-farm rent-free. There has been hoarding and pinching enough for one century in this family: Arnold and I will enjoy life.'

It was a pity so pleasant a day-dream could not be realised now in the bloom and freshness of life's morning. A man's ideas of happiness alter as the day wears on. They become more complex, take a wider range, yet centre more narrowly in self.

Deprived of his yacht, and at a loss what to do with himself when he was not riding Herne the Hunter, Oswald took to wandering about the woods and hills in a dreamy way, with a volume of poems in one pocket and a sketch-book and pencil in the other. He had some talent as a draughtsman—a facile delicate touch, and an innate love of the beautiful—which made it sweet to him to sit for a couple of hours before a group of ferns growing in

the clefts of a stone wall, reproducing every curve and feathery undulation with his pencil. His love of poetry was also innate, and just as he tried to reproduce the ferns and trees, and flowers and crags, and glimpses of the sea caught through some opening in the woods, so he tried, in a dimmer and less artistic manner, to echo the great singer of his time, whose harp's last notes yet hung in the air, and whose recent death was felt like a heart-wound by the more youthful and ardent of his disciples. In secret and at odd times of his idle life Oswald's sense of something wanting in existence forced itself into rhyme—verses to be kept in his pocket-book and reperused occasionally with a blush. A man moderately gifted might have been made a poet by the rich loveliness of nature round and about Combhaven, and by a life of dreamy idleness like Oswald's; but it must be confessed that young Mr. Pentreath never rose above the rhymester of *Pocket Magazines, Caskets, and Wreaths*, who addresses his plaintive verses to Celia on her marriage with a happier rival, or indites a monody on the death of the Princess Charlotte.

Pleasant though, even for one who had but poetic tastes without poetic power, to lie at ease among the ferns in Pentreath Wood and read *Manfred* or the *Corsair*.

So was Oswald lying one August afternoon, a week after his rescue from drowning, when he heard a boy's shrill voice ringing clear through the wood, and then the rustle of a woman's dress, and anon a sweeter voice than the lad's treble, exclaiming at the beauty of the ferns :

'We have none like these in our wilderness, Jim; you must get me some of these,' said the voice.

Oswald was on his feet in a moment. He had recognised the tones of the minister's daughter. She had a lovely speaking voice, round and full, like her father's voice softened to match her womanhood.

'Are you fern-hunting, Miss Haggard?' he asked, after they had shaken hands.

'We are very fond of ferns, Jim and I,' she answered, standing before him shyly, as if she hardly knew whether to stop or pass on after that first greeting. Jim stuck his stick into the ground,

and flung all his weight upon it, as if he was going to throw himself upon his sword like a noble Roman.

'Speak for yourself, Naomi,' he said, jerking himself upright again; 'I don't care for 'em, and they're precious hard to dig up. I have all the work, and you have all the glory. She teased father to give her a bit of waste ground on the other side of our orchard, you know,' he went on explanatorily to Oswald, 'and she's planted it with ferns and primroses, and St. John's wort and periwinkle, and a lot of trumpery, and calls it a wilderness; and a nice life she leads me, hunting for weeds and such-like. I should plant something good to eat if I had a bit of ground. Aunt Judith may well call it folly. Naomi's Folly, I call the place.'

'Don't be unkind, Jim. You've spent many a pleasant hour there reading.'

'Yes, when I could catch hold of a rare good story like *Rob Roy* or *Caleb Williams* or the *Mysteries of Udolpho*. It's a nice place to get out of aunt Judith's way, I grant. It's too far off the shop and the till for her to come bothering.'

‘It must be a delightful place, I should think,’ said Oswald, admiring the girl’s glowing face, framed in a cottage bonnet of coarsest straw. ‘Won’t you sit down and rest a little after your walk, Miss Haggard?’

‘I will,’ cried James, throwing himself at full length on the grass; ‘we were pretty well baked on the road before we got in here. It’s a jolly place, this wood of yours.’

Naomi seated herself on a low bank beside the turf on which her brother sprawled, his corduroy legs extended at an acute angle. Jim’s communicativeness had set her at her ease by this time. She looked wonderingly at Mr. Pentreath’s book, which lay face downwards on the mossy bank—a book in boards, covered with coarse blue paper: our ancestors were content to accept their choicest literature thus rudely clothed.

‘Is that a tale?’ inquired Jim, pointing to the volume.

‘No; it’s a play, by Lord Byron.’

Naomi gave a little sigh—half surprise, half horror—as if she had found herself suddenly in evil company.

'Do you read Lord Byron?' she asked.

'Till I know every line by heart,' answered Oswald, with a gush of enthusiasm. 'There never was such a poet; there never will be. All other poetry—except Shakespeare's—is prose in comparison. It is dull, dead, colourless—a thing of rule and grammar, a concatenation of carefully-chosen words. Or I should rather say all other poets have written from the head, he alone from the heart. And to think of Byron admiring Pope! It is like Mont Blanc admiring Holborn-hill.'

'Do you mean Alexander Pope?' inquired Naomi, as if there had been a clan of poets with that surname.

'Of course.'

'I have some pieces of his in a book father gave me, and I like them very much. 'Vital Spark,' and 'The Universal Prayer,' and an elegy on a poor young lady who committed suicide. Do you know those?'

'Yes; they are good enough in their way, and the *Essay on Man* is better. I don't deny the cleverness. Pope is full of wit and force and mean-

ing. But I don't call that kind of passionless stuff poetry, you know, any more than I call Holborn-hill a mountain. Compare that with *Manfred*, for instance,' opening his book.

'But is not Lord Byron's poetry very, very wicked?' inquired Naomi.

'There is a good deal of it that I would not recommend to a young lady; but take all that away, and there is enough left to make the greatest lyrical genius of all time,' answered Oswald warmly. 'Let me read you a page from *Manfred*.'

'O, no, please; my father has forbidden us to read Byron. I have read some extracts in the *Pocket Magazine*. They seemed very beautiful—one of them, from the *Bride of Abydos*, made me cry. I should dearly like to read more, but I am not likely to do that. Father has forbidden it, and he never changes his mind.'

'Something like my father when he refuses me money,' said Oswald. 'He always stands to his guns.'

'Are there any robbers in this here *Manfred*?' asked Jim, who did not always remember that he had been carefully educated.

'No.'

'Then I shouldn't care about it. I like such a man as Rob Roy. There's a fellow called Mazeppa in one of Lord Byron's stories. They tied him on the backs of wild horses, and let them scramble for him. That's the kind of person I like to read about.'

'You like the Waverley Novels, I suppose, Miss Haggard?' asked Oswald, feeling that literature was advancing his acquaintance with this dark-haired girl.

Naomi shook her head despondently.

'I have not read one of them,' she said. 'Father disapproves of novels. Jim had no right to read *Rob Roy*.'

'That's nonsense,' exclaimed Jim, sticking his hands deep in his corduroy pockets; 'a man may read anything. "Mustn't" is a word invented for girls.'

'I'm afraid your father disapproves of everything pleasant,' said Oswald.

'O, no; he is very good, very kind; but he likes us to read serious books, and the Bible before

all books. He says there is so much in the Bible that we could never come to the end of it if we were reading it all our lives. We should always find something new—something to wonder at.'

'Ah, I have felt that—about Shakespeare.'

Naomi looked unutterably shocked. To compare a profane playwright with the Bible thus lightly!

'It's a pity,' pursued Oswald; 'the Waverley Novels are so good. Some people say they are by Walter Scott, but I shouldn't think it likely that a man who writes poetry so well could suddenly burst out into splendid prose. And then the novels are better than Scott's poems.'

Naomi sighed. She felt that he was talking of a world from which she was shut out—nay, must always be excluded. It would be an act of rebellion, of actual sin, to cross the threshold of that wonder-world which her father taught her to consider a region of evil and temptation.

'I hope your father has been none the worse for his goodness to me the other day,' said Oswald, perceiving that literary topics were exhausted. 'He did not take cold, I trust.'

'O, no; father is very strong. I never remember his being ill.'

'A wonderful man, powerful in mind and body.'
Naomi's dark cheek glowed with pleasure.

'He is good,' she said, 'and he influences people for good. Many years ago, before he was married, he used to wander about the country preaching in the open air. He has told us how the miners used to come and hear him, and how the tears used to run down their blackened faces, just as they did when Whitfield preached to the wild rough people near Bristol.'

'I sometimes wish I hadn't been the son of such a saint,' remarked Jim, yawning and looking straight up at the cloudless blue. 'It's trying rather, at times. There's too much holiness at home, and too little pudding.'

'Ah, Jim, I hope God will give you a new heart some day,' remonstrated Naomi, 'and make you see things differently.'

'I should like to see more upon the table at supper-time. If aunt Judith had a new heart, we might find an improvement in the housekeeping.'

It's all very well to talk of carnal affections and sensual appetites; but what do apples grow for, if it isn't to be put into pasties? I wish Providence had set my lines in a farmhouse where there was plenty of squab-pie and junket. We never have a junket unless there's some of the saintly ones coming to tea, and they spoil the pleasure of good victuals by their psalm-singing.'

Oswald laughed outright, and laughter being infectious the serious Naomi laughed too, in spite of her regret that James should so discredit his father's teaching.

'Aunt Judith is much stricter about little things than father,' she said; 'and she and Jim don't get on very well.'

'Aunt Judith mixes her religion up with everything,' said Jim; 'she can't boil a potato without quoting Scripture. Father has more sense.'

After this they talked about the ferns, and Oswald told Naomi the names of the different kinds—long Latin names, at which her dark eyes grew large with wonder. They rose presently, and he showed them where certain varieties grew best, and

the stone or the soil they most affected. The rabbits scudded away, flourishing their silver-gray tails, as the footfalls stirred the bracken. The spreading branches of elm and beech cast their afternoon shadows on the sunlit sward. There was a warm yellow light in the wood, and a perfume of unseen pine-trees.

Oswald showed them his favourite spots—little bits of woodland landscape, unsurpassable in their way. It was all familiar to Naomi, for this wood was her chosen ramble on summer afternoons; the scene of many a blackberrying and nutting in autumn; a paradise of primroses and violets in April, a thicket of hawthorn in May. Yet though she had known these scenes from earliest childhood, they seemed to reveal new beauties when thus illustrated by an artistic mind.

‘How happy you must be to think that this lovely place is your father’s—that you belong to this wood, and it to you!’ she said presently.

‘Yes, I am very fond of it. Our race has sent its roots deep into the soil. Pentreaths have lived on this land from the days of King Stephen. We

have our pedigree cut and dried—Pentreaths of Pentreath—from sire to son. We have been rather fond of marrying cousins too, and keeping ourselves to ourselves, and our land together. Perhaps that's why we have dwindled into an enfeebled family of an old man and two boys. There are plenty of Pentreaths knocking about the world, I daresay; but of our particular branch Devonshire boasts only my father and his two sons. I am happy to say, however, that my father did not marry a kinswoman.'

That soft golden light of the westering sun reminded Naomi that it was nearly tea-time. She had no longing for tea and bread-and-butter—nay, would gladly have lingered among the ferns, in the flickering shadows of beechen branches, until the crescent moon, floating yonder high above the tree-tops, changed from gray to silver, and from silver to gold; but unpunctuality at meals was a crying sin in aunt Judith's creed, and Joshua himself was displeased when his children absented themselves from the family board. So Naomi dropped a stately curtsy, and said:

' Good-afternoon, sir ; we must be going now, I think. Come, Jim.'

Jim, deeply absorbed in looking upward for a squirrel that had just shot out of sight among lofty boughs, abandoned the quest unwillingly.

' All right, Naomi. Yes, I suppose it's tea-time, and we should catch it if we stayed any longer.'

' Come to-morrow afternoon,' said Oswald. ' You can come into the park, if you like—not that it's any better kept than the wood ; but we've some fine old timber.'

' Any squirrels?' asked Jim.

' Plenty of vermin.'

' Then we'll come. Now, Naomi, look sharp. Here are your ferns.'

Jim thrust a bundle of green stuff into her arms, leaving himself free to flourish his newly-peeled hazel, as he swaggered along by her side.

' Let me carry the ferns,' said Oswald.

' O, no, indeed. I couldn't think of taking you out of your way,' remonstrated Naomi.

' It isn't out of my way. My way leads nowhere. It will be something for me to do ; and

your father said I might come and see him sometimes.'

This was said with so decisive an air that Naomi submitted meekly, and abandoned the fern-roots to Mr. Pentreath's care. They all walked out of the wood together, and down the hill to the little bay or inlet—it was almost too narrow for a bay—at the mouth of that insignificant river which flowed behind the High-street of Combhaven, and began life as a brook high up among the wood-crowned hills. What a sleepy old place Combhaven looked this slumberous summer afternoon! The vagrant cat, prowling stealthily along those moss-grown tiles upon an opposite roof, seemed an important personage in the quiet of the scene. The little group of children at play in front of the Ring of Bells, the lazy horse contemplating emptiness over a hedge, the fat old landlord of the First and Last smoking his pipe in the sunny porch,—were all of life that the village held.

Naomi opened the little green garden-gate, which admitted her and her companions into a paradise of stocks, clove-carnations, and sweet-peas, about twenty

feet wide. The shop had its frontage of barren gravel; but this little garden or forecourt gave a gentility and exclusiveness to the dwelling-house which was not unappreciated by Judith Haggard, despite her Radical propensities. Indeed, it must be confessed that Miss Haggard's Radicalism chiefly affected other people.

The parlour, with its high painted dado and flowered paper, looked cool and shadowy this afternoon. The dark tea-board and old-fashioned Staffordshire tea-service, sprawling blue flowers on a buff ground; the shining walnut-wood tables and broad-seated chairs; the dimity window-curtains with their knotted fringes and tassels; the flowers that made a bank of green and red and purple in the open window,—all had some touch of pleasantness to Oswald Pentreath's fancy. It was a commonplace interior enough, doubtless; but it was assuredly more like a home than the stately decay of the Grange.

Judith sat bolt upright before the tea-board, a picture of prim spinsterhood, in her gray stuff gown, broad muslin collar, coral earrings, and square mosaic brooch. Joshua was in his big horsehair-covered

arm-chair near the open window, looking weary and exhausted. He had just returned from a long pastoral round among distant homesteads and cottages, where it was his custom to read and expound the Scriptures, to pray with the devout, or to pray for the unawakened. Much of the work, which in a better state of things would have been done by the parish-priest, was left for Joshua. His flock were better cared for, more earnestly watched, than the sheep of the established and endowed shepherd; and it is scarcely to be wondered at, perhaps, that while the duly-qualified pastor saw his sheep dwindle, Joshua's flock grew larger year by year, until they threatened to become too numerous for the square barn-like Little Bethel at the top of the hilly High-street.

'We met Mr. Pentreath in the wood, father,' said Naomi, 'and he has come to see you.'

'Yes; and I hope you've spent time enough in idleness,' snapped aunt Judith; 'and those tea-cloths not hemmed yet, I'll warrant.'

'I finished the last of the dozen before dinner, aunt,' replied Naomi, with her grave meekness,

which had nothing of timidity or foolishness, only a tranquil submission to supreme authority.

‘They ought to have been top-sewed,’ said Judith; ‘hemming won’t stand the wear and tear they’ll get from such a girl as Sally.’

‘I sewed them, aunt; and you know Sally seldom washes the tea-things.’

‘Never, I should hope,’ cried Judith. ‘There wouldn’t be many of ’em left if she did; and it’s a pattern you can’t match nowadays, if you was to give its weight in gold.’

‘What a good thing that ugliness should go out of fashion!’ retorted Jim, not foreseeing the day when the commonest of those Staffordshire cups and saucers might take their places among the chosen specimens in a collector’s cabinet.

‘Ah,’ sighed Judith, ‘they were your grandmother’s; but that makes little difference to you. You’ve no reverence for those that came before you.’

This conversation had been carried on in undertones at the tea-table, while Joshua had given Mr. Pentreath friendly welcome. They all drew round

the tea-board after this. Aunt Judith filled the cups with precision, and the conversation became more general and more ceremonious. There was not much to talk about—not much local chit-chat—in Combhaven; but they did manage somehow to find something to say. Joshua talked of the people he had visited in his day's duty—tenants of the Squire's most of them; their grievances; their ailments—scalds from tea-kettles, wounds from scythes or reaping-hooks; their sick cattle. Mr. Haggard confined his talk to worldly subjects, being wiser in this respect than some of his fellow-labourers.

Oswald felt himself quite at home in the calm family circle, being happily ignorant of aunt Judith's low opinion of him. He sipped his tea and ate his bread-and-butter, and looked at the flowers in the window and the coloured busts of George Whitfield and John Wesley in Bow china on the mantelpiece, and familiarised himself with the aspect of the place. There was a mahogany bookcase with glass doors on one side of the fireplace, containing several rows of books, neatly arranged and neatly bound—books that looked as if they were treasured by their owner

—not like Oswald's ragged regiment of volumes, always out of their proper places.

'You are fond of reading, Mr. Haggard,' said the young man, looking at the bookcase.

'Very fond. I give all my spare hours to my books, but my spare hours do not make many days in the year. I carry a volume in my pocket when I have to walk far, and read as I go. That is my best chance of enjoying a book.'

'And who are your favourite authors?'

'Bunyan, Baxter, and Law.'

These were strangers to Oswald Pentreath, save for a dim remembrance of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, devoured and wondered over in early boyhood.

The conversation came to a dead stop at this point, but there was no embarrassment. A pause in the flow of talk is not such an awful thing in a Devonshire village as it is at a London dinner-table, where the fountain of wit is supposed to be inexhaustible, and a silence reflects discredit on the assemblage.

'Let us go into the garden,' said Joshua, when everybody's second cup was empty.

Jim had turned his bottom-upwards, and balanced his teaspoon across it, thereby scandalising aunt Judith, whose reproving frown had no influence upon him.

‘Yes, and I’ll show you Naomi’s wilderness,’ said the boy to Oswald, in a confidential undertone.

It was one of Joshua’s leisure evenings. There was no service at Little Bethel, and until closing-time there was nothing for him to do in the shop. He could afford to lounge in his garden and refresh himself with a little repose after a toilsome day.

Aunt Judith went to the shop, where there was generally a run upon tape, needles, and such small gear in the leisure hours of evening, good housewives, who had been too busy to touch their needlework in the day, discovering their wants after tea and running down to Haggard’s to supply the same, and perhaps to spend five minutes or so inquiring after the health of that excellent man, the minister.

The rest repaired to the garden—an oblong piece of ground of about an acre, running off at the end into another acre, of irregular shape, which had been an orchard for the last hundred years.

There was nothing picturesque about Mr. Haggard's garden. It was neatly laid out upon utilitarian principles, with just so much regard to ornament as is implied in narrow borders of old-fashioned cottage flowers in front of homely vegetables, and a row of espaliers screening beds of onions and turnips. It was a garden running over with fertility, from the young pear-trees, around whose lowermost branches the scarlet-runners had entwined themselves lovingly, to the golden pumpkins sprawling in the setting sunlight, and the deformed old quince-trees that hung over a pond in a corner by the wall. The narrow paths were neatly kept, and there were very few weeds among vegetables or flowers, Jim being held answerable for the condition of things, and labouring here himself daily, with some little assistance from the shop-boy and a good deal of help from Naomi, who was passionately fond of flowers.

Mr. Haggard walked to the end of the garden with the young people, and then, feeling tired after his long round by hill and dale, seated himself on a bench by the quince-trees, which with an ancient walnut made this the shady spot of the garden.

There was a square grass-plat here, upon which stood a rude table—a specimen of Jim's carpentry; and on very warm afternoons aunt Judith was sometimes persuaded into an out-of-door tea-drinking here—a concession on her part only to be obtained by much diplomacy.

Joshua was fond of his garden in a passive way, and it was here that he communed with himself on Saturday afternoons, meditating his subject for the next day's sermons. It was here he read the Non-conformist divines, or indulged in that introspective study, that searching out of his own heart, which formed a prominent part of his system. There was not much to search for in the minister's heart—no lurking evil to be thrust out of it. In singleness of purpose, in directness of aim, in simplicity of life, he came as near perfection as it is given to erring man to come.

The young people strolled on along the narrow path to the orchard, leaving Joshua to his meditations. If Judith had been there, she would have taken pains to prevent this unrestricted communion between the young Squire and Naomi; but her

brother, in his contemplation of far-off things, was apt to overlook trifles lying near at hand, and he saw no danger in the temporary association of these young minds.

‘Come and see our wilderness,’ cried Jim, opening the orchard-gate.

The orchard was a queerly-shaped enclosure, a strip of land running into a sharp point; and this triangular end had been allowed to be waste ground until Naomi's fifteenth birthday, on which privileged occasion she begged the bit of waste from her father by way of birthday gift; and from that time forward it had been her constant delight and Jim's occasional caprice to adorn the spot with all manner of Nature's wildlings of forest, heath, and dell. It was a wonderful soil, that wilderness—everything grew there. Plants that affected sand, and plants that hungered for loam; flowers that loved the sun, and ferns enamoured of shade. They all grew together in harmony, like the happy family of birds and beasts, to oblige Naomi. Such primroses, yellow and purple; such bluebells and foxgloves, and dragon's-mouth and marsh-mallows, and amethyst-

hued heaths, and gold and silver broom, and ferns of every denomination.

‘I think we could grow seaweed if we tried,’ said Jim.

The old, old orchard was like a hospital of cripples, so lame and twisted and warped and crooked were the ancient trees, with more gummy exudation upon some of them than fruit; such gray old bark, such yawning wounds in their trunks. The turf was deep and soft, all hillocks and hollows; and in one sunny corner there was a row of beehives, the produce whereof was usually sold by aunt Judith, as a favour and at a good price, to some of the superior customers.

‘Other people get the honey, and we run the risk of getting stung,’ complained James, who felt injured by this arrangement. ‘That’s what comes of being brought up by an aunt. If mother had lived, we should have had cakes and junkets sometimes, I’ll warrant.’

Jim had but a cloudy memory of his dead mother, and was apt to associate her loss with the idea of indulgences which would have flowed naturally from the maternal bounty.

They loitered a little in the orchard, talking in a lazy summer-evening way about nothing particular. It was long past the Squire's dinner-time, and Oswald knew that he had forfeited his dinner by absence. There was no such thing as a meal served out of due season at the Grange. Mrs. Nichols, the house-keeper, knew her duty too well for such foolish concessions. But Oswald was reconciled to the loss of his dinner. Female society was almost a novelty to him. The Squire lived like a recluse, and enjoyed the privilege of being eminently unpopular—a privilege which, in his own opinion, saved him five hundred a year.

'Your popular man is everybody's friend except his own,' remarked the Squire, in his philosophic mood. 'People are always asking favours of him. Nobody ever asks me for anything.'

Oswald therefore, as the son of a miserly hermit, stinted of pocket-money, and of a nature too generous to live easily under a weight of obligation, visited hardly any one of those pleasant country houses which lay far apart among the fertile hills and valleys of his native place. He lived as lonely a life as ever a young

man had to endure, and was in a better position to cultivate the Byronic temperament than most of the great poet's disciples. Happily Nature had given him a disposition to take life easily, rather than the misanthropic mind; and solitary and secluded as his existence was, he tried to make the best of it, amusing himself after his own simple fashion, and complained to nobody. There was a touch of bitterness occasionally in his intercourse with his father, the old man's meanness and suspicion being almost too much for endurance; but this was the only bitter in his life. To this young man, therefore, reduced of necessity to the society of peasants and boatmen, it was a new thing to find himself in the company of a handsome young woman, who spoke with a certain refinement and expressed herself fairly, although her range of ideas was limited. Those vague yearnings of Naomi's for something wider and brighter than the narrow life of Combhaven answered to the sense of loss in his own mind. There was sympathy between them already, though this was but the second time of their meeting.

'I suppose you would hardly stay at Combhaven

if you were a man, Miss Haggard?' said Oswald, after they had discussed the place and its dulness.

'O, no. If I were a man I should be a minister, and I would go and preach to the Cornish miners, as father did when he was a young man; or else I would be a missionary, and go to India.'

'Ah, you talked about that the other night.'

'Yes; I should like to teach those poor creatures—to turn them from their hideous gods, their human sacrifices, their cruelties. Why do we let them go on with such dreadful creeds?'

'I fancy the work of conversion would be rather beyond us. A missionary may labour in a corner, set up his little schoolroom, and baptise a handful or so of dusky Christians, who will go back to Siva and the rest of them as soon as his back is turned; but to turn all India from her false idols is a project beyond man's dreams of the impossible. When Burke addressed the House of Commons on the evils of our government in India, the territory of the East India Company was larger than Russia and Turkey. We have extended our conquests since his day, and we are but a sprinkling among that vast population. I think you

must put India out of your head, Miss Haggard. The Thugs would strangle you; or the Khoords would bury you up to your neck and sacrifice you to their gods; or the tigers would eat you.'

'Of course,' cried Jim. 'How few people ever go to India that don't get eaten by tigers in the long-run! I never took up a magazine yet without seeing a picture of tiger-eating.'

They had arrived at the wilderness by this time—a corner of fern-tangle and sweet-smelling flowers, with masses of rough stone here and there amongst the greenery; which stonework had cost Jim much labour. There were some elder-trees leaning over from an adjoining orchard, and the spreading branches of a mulberry, which shaded one side of the small enclosure. There was a stone bench, which Jim had picked up from among the ruins of an old manor-house; and in the middle of the wilderness, its rugged base choked with fern and primrose roots, there stood an old stone sundial, spoil from the same ruined mansion. That sundial and the monkish-looking bench gave an air of antiquity to the place. It was quite out of the world of Combhaven, as lonely

as if it had been an oasis in the desert. One might have lived all one's life in the High-street, and never suspected the existence of Naomi's wilderness. A mild-faced sheep sometimes peeped at it through an opening in the blackberry-hedge, perhaps wondering whether those ferns and flowers were edible; but except the sheep, there was rarely any sign of life in the adjoining orchard.

Oswald praised the spot, as in duty bound. It could not appear particularly beautiful to him after the picturesque wildness of Pentreath park and wood; but it had a quaint prettiness that was not without its charm. He sat down by Naomi on the broad old stone bench, and watched her thoughtfully and in silence for a little. She had taken her knitting out of her pocket, and the needles were flashing swiftly under her slender fingers. The hands were brown, but slim and well shaped.

She was very handsome, Oswald thought—much handsomer than the Devonshire beauties, with their complexions of roses and cream. Her face had a noble look: the features boldly carved; the eyes deep and dark, with heavy lids such as he remem-

bered seeing oftener in sculpture than in flesh ; the mouth was full and firm ; the chin a thought too square for feminine loveliness. If the face erred at all, it was that the girl was too like her father :—manly firmness rather than womanly softness prevailed. But Oswald could not see any blemish in this noble countenance. He was drawn to its owner with strongest sympathy. It was not love at first sight, but friendship, confidence, companionship, which drew him ; and he had no thought of peril in this new influence. What peril could there be, indeed, for him, even if the fancy had been of a warmer tendency ? He had no money to spend, but he was the master of his own heart. He might dispose of that as he pleased.

‘Marry a dairymaid if you like,’ the Squire had once said to him, in his brutal fashion ; ‘but I shall expect you to keep her until I’m under the sod. An impoverished estate can’t afford to recognise early marriages, unless they bring land or money along with them.’

They had been in the wilderness about half an hour, Jim exhibiting his chosen specimens, in pursuit

of which he had, by his showing, more or less imperilled his life, hanging on to precipices like the samphire gatherer, scaling inaccessible hills, and losing himself in pathless woods inhabited by the reptile tribe. The sun had gone down behind the old tiled roofs and thatched gables of the High-street, and Joshua had left his quiet garden for the bustle and business of the shop.

‘We’d better be going indoors, Jim,’ said Naomi, rolling up her stocking. ‘You’ve your sum to do for to-morrow.’

Oswald felt that he had no excuse for prolonging his visit. He walked back to the house with Naomi and her brother, but did not go indoors with them. There was a side gate opening into the street, and here he stopped to wish them good-evening.

‘You might as well stop to supper,’ said Jim. ‘It would be livelier if you stayed.’

‘I think I have intruded too long already,’ answered Oswald ceremoniously; and as Naomi did not second her brother’s invitation, he shook hands with them both, and went away.

Aunt Judith was standing at the house-door when

they went in—a surprise for both, as it was her custom to be in the shop at this hour.

‘I hope you’ve wasted enough time with your fine gentleman,’ she said, with extra acidity.

‘I wasn’t wasting time, aunt; I had my knitting with me,’ replied Naomi; ‘and there was nothing for me to do indoors.’

‘A pity there wasn’t. Idling about the garden with a gentleman above you in station! What would your father say to that, I wonder?’

‘Father was with us part of the time,’ said Naomi.

‘Was he really? and what about the rest of the time when he wasn’t with you? Fine carryings-on indeed for a grocer’s daughter! No good ever came of that kind of thing, Miss Naomi, I can tell you.’

‘No harm will ever come of it while I’m here,’ cried Jim, his face crimson with anger. ‘I’d knock down any man that said an uncivil word to my sister. As for the young Squire, he’s a gentleman, and as soft-spoken as a girl.’

‘I never trust your soft-spoken people,’ answered Judith; and at this juncture a shrill cry of ‘Miss Haggard, wanted, please,’ from the opened door at

the back of the shop diverted the spinster's attention, and she ran off to measure calico or printed goods for an impatient matron.

Supper-time, prayers, and Scripture reading seemed a little duller than usual to Naomi that evening. The quiet monotony of life hung upon her heavily, like an actual burden. She had begun to ask herself of late whether existence was to go on always in the same measured round—eventless, unvarying; whether the portion which appeared satisfying and all-sufficient for aunt Judith was also to content her; whether those vague aspirings of the soul for something loftier and wider, which stirred in her breast like the wings of imprisoned birds, were to wear themselves out by their own restlessness, and know no fruition. To-night the question seemed to press itself upon her more closely than usual. O, how much better to be a female missionary—a teacher of little tawny heathens in some clearing of the jungle; or to visit fever-poisoned prisons, like Mrs. Fry! How much fairer any life in which there was peril, and with peril the reward of brave deeds, the hope of glory!

‘What use am I in this world?’ she thought, on her knees in that solemn silence which ensued after Joshua’s extemporaneous prayer—a pause which he bade his household devote to self-examination and pious meditation. ‘If I were to die to-morrow, no one would be the worse for my loss. Father would be sorry, perhaps, because he is good, not because I am of any use to him, or make his life happier by living. There is no duty I do that aunt Judith would not do better than I if I were gone; and the tasks I do listlessly she would perform briskly, putting all her heart and mind into them. But if I were to go abroad and teach heathen children, I feel that I could work honestly and earnestly—yes, like those good women I have read of.’

These were Naomi’s musings on her knees to-night. No fairer scheme of life offered itself to her girlish fancy than the missionary idea. She resolved to work for that end, to read more, to be more attentive to her father’s teaching, to raise herself to that higher level from which she might shed enlightenment on ignorant Pagan souls. And behold, in the midst of these high resolves, her thoughts flew off at

a tangent. 'If I were Mr. Pentreath I would be a soldier,' she thought. 'I wonder if he is tired of Combhaven? But he has his horse, and, until the other day, he had his yacht. It is different for him. Yet, if I were free like him, with a good old name, I would try to be something more than an idle country gentleman. People respect his brother for running away to sea. I know that by the way they talk of the two in Combhaven.'

'You'd better take your candle and go to bed, child,' Miss Haggard said to Naomi directly after supper. 'I want to have a few words with Joshua.'

Of all things most displeasing to the minister's human weakness was a few words with his sister Judith. That preface of hers seemed as prophetic of evil as the screech-owl's warning or the minor howl of the dog. Nothing pleasant ever came of a few words with Judith.

'Well, Judith, what is it now?' asked her brother, as soon as they were alone, anxious to come to the worst without beating about the bush.

'Only that I think it's a pity you don't keep

your eyes a little wider open to see what's under your nose. It's all very well to be looking towards the New Jerusalem, and I'd be the last to lose my habitation in that blessed city, but while a man lives among the Philistines he should have an eye to his own household.'

'What's the matter, my dear? The new cask of Irish butter is not rancid, I hope? I gave a half-penny a pound more for it than the last.'

'No, Joshua, the butter is as sweet as a new cobnut. But I don't like your daughter's goings on with Mr. Pentreath.'

'What do you mean, Judith?' cried the minister, with a flash of natural indignation.

'Bringing him home to tea as if he was her equal. A pretty thing to set tongues wagging in Combhaven.'

'I see no need for people to talk about us because the Squire's son takes a cup of tea in my house. He is better born than my daughter, I grant you, but not better bred. Naomi is a lady in mind and nature, and as such no man's inferior. And she is something less than my daughter if she

does not respect herself so much as to make every man respect her.'

'That's all very fine,' retorted Judith, 'but you'd better look out that no mischief comes of it. You heard what Jabez Long said while I was working like a slave to bring the life back to that young man's body. It's unlucky to save a man from drowning. Take care the bad luck doesn't come our way. I don't like to see Mr. Pentreath hanging about the place.'

'Why, Judith, you can't be weak enough or wicked enough to give heed to such a vulgar superstition.'

'I don't know about that. There's a grain of good sense sometimes in vulgar superstitions.'

'Sometimes, perhaps; but in that particular superstition not an iota. Our fishermen get the fancy from the North. It is a common belief in Shetland.'

'Have it your own way,' said Judith, with an offended air; 'but I'm afraid you've too much book-learning to be wise about the affairs of this life.'

CHAPTER V.

THE MINISTER GOES ON A JOURNEY.

VERY tranquil was the progress of life at Comb-haven. None of those bubbles called events rippled the calm surface of that Devonian millpond. Every day and every week brought the same duties—a beaten round of petty cares and unexciting pleasures—pleasures so small as to have been positively invisible to any observer surveying this quiet rustic life from the outside. Even the changes of the season brought but little change to the dwellers in the High-street. The farming folks had their harvest-homes, and apple-storing time, and cider-brewing, and all the variety of rustic life; but in the village—by courtesy, town—the dull unalterable round went on from January to December. Save for the fire-glow upon cottage-windows, and the cheery look of the forge in the early dusk, you would hardly have known winter from summer. Frost rarely visited this favoured clime. There was a good deal

of mist and rain, and sometimes fierce winds came tearing across the sea as savagely as if they meant to root up Comhaven altogether, but the traditional winter of the North—icicle-crowned and snow-mantled—was a stranger here.

Naomi, just nineteen years of age in this misty November, schooled her soul to bear the quiet of her life, and performed her daily duties with a sweet tranquillity which might have seemed the essence of patience to any one who could have looked into her heart and seen its eager yearnings for a busier existence. She had talked to her father of her desire for missionary work, and he had answered her in the words of St. Paul, 'Let your women keep silence in the churches : for it is not permitted unto them to speak.'

Very hard words they sounded to Naomi.

'But I don't want to preach, father,' she pleaded ;
'I only want to teach the little children.'

'There are children enough for you to teach here, Naomi. I am not satisfied yet with our Sunday-school. The boys are backward ; and the girls, though a little better, are woefully unenlightened.'

Naomi sighed and submitted. This was an unanswerable answer. If she could not do good work with these little English Christians, born and bred to belief in the Scriptures, how could she hope to make converts of little heathens, speaking a strange language? Mr. Pentreath had given her a Hindostani grammar that had belonged to his uncle, Captain Tremaine, and she had worked in secret at the language—learning a little bit at a time during the extra quarter of an hour she could venture to keep her candle burning before going to bed. Anything beyond a quarter of an hour might have drawn upon her the displeasure of aunt Judith, who had a sharp eye to the consumption of bedroom candles, and would have suspected the unholy practice of novel-reading or a sinful lingering over the braiding of hair, had she perceived an undue diminution of the tallow. So Naomi, being convinced that she was not good enough or clever enough for a missionary, began to despair of ever releasing herself from the prison-chamber of life in a village. She had no yearning for fine dresses, or pleasures, or any of the objects that might have presented themselves to the

mind of a girl brought up in a boarding-school, but she sighed for something more than Combhaven could give her ; or else perhaps she needed some stronger anchor to hold her in those quiet waters than any which her household ties offered.

Her father loved her. Of that fact she had no doubt ; but his affection was so undemonstrative as to seem near akin to coldness. He was formal in his intercourse with his children—more given to reprove than to praise, to counsel than to caress. As a child—finding herself motherless in childhood—she had given her father an almost romantic love, following him about with faithful solicitude, fearing, if he were out of her sight for a little longer than usual, that he would go away and she should never see him more, shedding childhood's passionate tears at the thought that he would die as her mother had died, and leave her lonely. The father had responded to this affection with an almost equal warmth, holding the little girl on his knees through many an hour of pious meditation, taking her with him on many a journey, carrying her when she was tired, watching by her little bed through childhood's fevers

and illnesses, and, in some wise, filling the dead mother's place, much to Judith's displeasure, who argued that a woman must know more about the treatment of a sick child than a man, were he twenty times a father.

Little by little, as Naomi grew from childhood to girlhood, this sympathy between father and daughter had dwindled—on the father's side, not on the daughter's. Naomi was still as fond, but more reserved in the expression of fondness. She was too old to sit on her father's knee. She must give up those pleasant wanderings by her father's side. She had her lessons to learn; her daily tasks, scholastic and domestic. Aunt Judith taught her household economy; Joshua trained her mind. The father was transformed into the schoolmaster; and Judith took care to impress upon her brother that if he were too indulgent, Naomi would respect him too little to profit by his instructions.

'When we were boy and girl, we used to call father and mother sir and madam,' said Judith. 'You must remember that, Joshua.'

'Yes, Judith. But I don't know that we loved

them any more on that account. Father's a beautiful word. I should be sorry to hear Naomi change it for sir.'

In pure conscientiousness, and with a view to the culture of his daughter's mind, Joshua abandoned those loving ways which had been so dear to his daughter's heart. The change was so gradual that she was hardly aware of its progress. It was only when she looked back to those happy childish days that she knew how much she had lost of life's sweetness. Yet she had no thought of complaint, nor was her father's goodness lessened in her estimation. He was still the one most perfect man her little world held; perfect as the best of those good men she had read about in her narrow range of literature.

Mr. Pentreath availed himself of Joshua's permission to call occasionally, and dropped in now and then of an evening, or came at dusk and drank tea out of the blue and buff Staffordshire teacups. Sometimes he stayed for prayers and supper, and listened attentively to the minister's exposition of psalm or chapter. Perhaps he obtained more real knowledge of the Scriptures from these evenings

than from all those Sunday services which he had attended, absent-minded and sleepy, in the old parish church, where the family pew of the Pen-treaths was as large as a small room, provided with a fireplace, and screened from the vulgar gaze by old oak panelling and faded green curtains on brazen rods—a fine place for slumber.

Joshua took the young man's visits as a matter of course; but Judith expended her spleen in various shrugs and elevations of thin eyebrows and depressions of thin lips.

‘How fond the young Squire is of us all!’ she said; ‘we ought to be uncommonly proud, I'm sure. Is it you or me, I wonder, he comes for?’

Whereupon Joshua's frown warned her that she had better push her insinuations no further.

It was summer time again—early summer; the sweet fresh season of newly-opened roses and new-mown hay. The young ferns were unfolding their tender green fronds under every hedge, on every stone bank; the hartstongues uncurling their pointed tips; fields purple with clover, or silver-

white with blossoming beans; a time of sweetest subtlest odours; the sea yonder, deep translucent green, shining through every opening in the undulating land, through ragged breaks in upland hawthorn hedges, above the beans and the clover, like another world, fairer even than earth.

In such sweet summer weather Joshua Haggard left Combhaven on a journey that was to last a week. He wore his Sunday suit, stout buckled shoes, and carried a change of linen and the simple necessaries of his toilet in a small leather knapsack. His journey was to be performed for the most part in lumbering old stage-coaches, but the last twenty miles were to be done upon foot. Mr. Haggard was going to assist at the opening of an humble little chapel in the wild Cornish country, between the Lizard and Penzance. The minister of the new chapel was one of his pupils and disciples; a dark-browed young shoemaker of five-and-twenty, who had come in of an evening with leather-stained hands to read and study under Joshua Haggard's direction, and had nursed a tender passion for Naomi which he had never ventured to reveal. Perhaps it was his

consciousness that this affection was vain which decided Nicholas Wild upon turning his back on the quiet comfort of Combhaven about two years ago, and taking up his staff as a wandering preacher. He had kept his own body and soul together by mending the shoes of his hearers ; and he had ministered to the souls of his shifting flocks without fee or reward, content if in field or on common he could see listening faces crowding round him, and hear the untaught voices pealing up to the open sky in the hymns he dictated to his congregation line by line. After an itinerant career of two years, Nicholas had become so popular in one particular district as to find it advisable to settle there altogether ; and his congregation had contrived among them to build him a chapel—such a curious little tabernacle, in an angle of a field, as lonely as if it had dropped from the sky. The walls of cob ; the roof covered with large thick slabs of roughly-cut slate, like flagstones ; a small door at one end, a big window at each side, and about as much architectural design or beauty in the building as there is in a toy Noah's ark. But the temple of Solomon was never lovelier in the eyes of its

founder than was this rude barn to Nicholas Wild. He wrote to his beloved pastor and teacher, telling him of his good fortune ; how the Word had prospered in these far western villages by his humble efforts ; and entreating Joshua as a favour beyond all measure of gratitude to come and preach the opening sermon in this new-built chapel.

‘ Your voice would call down a blessing upon my work,’ he wrote, ‘ and move the hearts of my faithful flock as I can never hope to stir them, though Providence has blessed my teaching. I want the opening of this lowly temple to be a golden page in their memories so long as they live. I want them to feel that this tabernacle among the hills has been sanctified and glorified by an inspired voice, by a chosen messenger of the gospel, gifted above all other servants of God.’

To an appeal such as this Joshua Haggard would have esteemed it sinful to have turned a deaf ear. Nicholas Wild’s intelligence and piety had made the youth very dear to him. He was proud of his pupil’s success, as in a considerable measure his own work ; and his heart warmed at the thought of that little

chapel among the wild hills by that rock-bound shore, over whose craggy pinnacles the dark-winged cormorants and the silver-white gulls skim, and wheel, and scream, and chatter.

To Joshua this Cornish coast was at once familiar and dear. He, too, had wandered there in his hardy youth. He had taught and preached from Camelford to Penzance, and his teaching had prospered. His name was a word of power in the West, and he seldom let a summer go by without making some such journey as he was making now—to preach, to inspect village schools, to spend a day here and there among old friends, and perform other duties of his office.

The little chapel was opened to the eager flock one bright June morning ; men, women, and children in their smartest clothes, as if for a flower-feast ; a congregation gathered from twenty miles round, so eager were these Dissenters to hear Joshua Haggard. The fervid extemporaneous prayers were poured forth above the heads of that assembly, all standing to pray after their manner ; the enthusiastic hymns were sung—hymns which compared

the cob-walled barn to the gorgeous temple in the sacred city; and then Joshua ascended to the deal pulpit, and opened his Bible upon the green-baize cushion and preached a two hours' sermon upon one of his favourite texts: 'I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.'

No one felt that two hours' discourse a sentence too long, unless it were, perhaps, the children—some of whom yawned piteously, or shuffled on their seats, and were shaken and otherwise admonished by offended elders; while others of still more tender years sank into placid slumber, and enjoyed the warmth of the atmosphere and the sonorous lullaby of Joshua's deep melodious voice.

Nicholas Wild was in a glow of gratitude as he walked home to the adjacent village with his friend.

'They will never forget your words to-day, nor shall I,' he said. 'They have sunk into my heart. You have told us what the minister of such a flock should be. It shall be the business of my life to come as near as I can to that sublime type. It ought

to be easy for me, having known you. I have but to imitate my master upon earth in order to approach nearer to the example of my Master in heaven.'

'Gently, Nicholas, gently; you offend me by such words as those. Providence has been very good to me. My lines have fallen in pleasant places; life has been made easy to me. I have not been tried as some are tried, or tempted as some are tempted. I have known little sorrow. My faith has not been shaken by adversity. I have known neither hunger nor thirst, disease nor loss of fortune. My wife was a good woman, my children are affectionate and dutiful, my business is prosperous. I am like Job before Satan asked to try him. What am I, then, that I should boast, or suffer others to boast of me?'

To which Nicholas replied with fervid eulogy:

'All that I am I owe to you,' he said, 'as Saul owed all to Samuel. And your lovely daughter, Mr. Haggard, to have known her, to have lived in her company for a little while, is to have held fellowship with angels.'

'Nicholas, you must not talk like that. My daughter is a good girl, but—'

‘ She has more than common goodness. My sisters are good women, but they are not like Naomi. She is strong and noble, like the women of old ; a woman to sacrifice herself for others, to suffer in silence ; to do great deeds like the women of old time, like Jael or Judith.’

‘ I would rather she should resemble Ruth or Esther,’ replied Joshua, smiling at an enthusiasm which betrayed the speaker’s secret. ‘ I would rather she should live her simple life, meek, obedient, faithful, domestic, happy herself, and the source of happiness to others.’

‘ We have often talked together of spiritual things, Mr. Haggard, and perhaps Naomi has poured forth her heart more freely to me than she would venture to do to you. Her heart burns within her to do some good and great thing. She would like to go on a foreign mission ; to teach the children of the heathen, to carry light into dark places.’

‘ Nonsense,’ exclaimed Joshua contemptuously. ‘ Let her stay at home and mind her own business. That is a woman’s mission. Remember what St. Paul says about women.’

‘St. Paul had not the privilege of knowing Naomi Haggard,’ said the rapturous Nicholas. ‘But I will not presume to argue with you, sir; only tell me that she is well and happy.’

‘She is well, I am thankful to say; and I suppose she is happy. She has no cause for unhappiness.’

‘The female mind is a delicate thing, Mr. Haggard, and common blessings do not always suffice for its contentment. Has Naomi any thought of settling?’

‘You mean getting married?’ said Joshua. ‘No, I think not. We have heard nothing about that yet awhile.’

‘None but a superior person would suit Naomi.’

‘I think not; and her only admirer—not an avowed admirer as yet—is a person so far her superior in birth and fortune that I am doubtful whether I do right in encouraging their acquaintance.’

Nicholas Wild’s cheek paled at this. He had long ago despaired of winning Naomi for himself, but it was not the less a pang to hear that she was likely to be won by another, and that other a man

of higher rank than himself. This gave a keener point to the knife that stabbed him, for Nicholas, though a good fellow, was not large-minded, and was inclined to believe that to be a gentleman by birth and fortune was to belong to the children of Belial.

‘It would be hard to find anybody worthy of Naomi,’ he said, ‘least of all a pampered idler, with nothing but fine clothes and a fine name to recommend him.’

‘The young man I speak of has not been very kindly treated by Fortune, though birth has made him a gentleman, and he will have a fair estate by and by. You remember young Pentreath, the Squire’s son?’

‘Remember him? yes; a pale-faced slip of a youth. He comes of a bad race, if all is true that folks say about the old Squire.’

‘All that folks say of their neighbours rarely is true,’ replied Joshua. ‘I daresay the Squire led a wild life in his youth, and I know that he is a hard uncharitable man in his age; but there is no reason his son should resemble him in character any more

than he does in looks, and there have seldom been father and son less alike.'

Joshua told his disciple about the wreck of the Dolphin, and the friendship that had since arisen between Oswald and the minister's family.

'I have very little reason to suppose that his feeling for Naomi is anything warmer than the friendship he has for the rest of us,' concluded Joshua; 'but they have been a good deal together, and they seem to have many ideas in common.'

'He could not know her and not love her,' replied Nicholas warmly. 'How does the old Squire take it?'

'You mean does he approve his son's intimacy with me and mine?' said Joshua. 'So far as I can discover he neither approves or disapproves. He lets his son take his own course in all things, except spending money. His poor sordid soul seems to be so absorbed in the task of scraping together every six-pence he can screw out of the land, that he gives no care or heed to his son's existence. The youth who ran away to sea is not more remote from his father than the son who lives in the same house with him.'

Here the conversation ended. They had arrived at the village where Nicholas lived. He had a comfortable lodging of two clean little rooms in a stone cottage set in a square plot of land, chiefly devoted to the growth of potatoes, but beautified by a few rosebushes and a row of tiger lilies on each side of the narrow path leading from the little wooden gate to the cottage door. His landlady had prepared quite a banquet in honour of the minister—a potato pasty and a boiled leg of pork, with cabbage enough for a large family.

Here Joshua lodged for the night. He set out at seven o'clock next morning, after a comfortable breakfast, on the first stage of his homeward journey. He might have taken the coach at Helston, only nine miles off, but he had made up his mind to walk at least as far as Truro, not always choosing the straightest road thither, but taking a peep at various spots that had been dear and familiar to him in those wandering days of his youth, when he had carried the glad tidings from hamlet to hamlet and homestead to homestead, dropping unawares upon sequestered households far from the voices of

this world, as if he had been in very truth a heaven-sent messenger.

‘I’m afraid you’ll find the journey tiring,’ said Nicholas at parting; ‘the sun is so hot, and the roads are dusty.’

‘I love a hot sun, and I must put up with the dust,’ answered Joshua cheerily. ‘It will do my heart good to see the old places and the old faces, and to find that I have not been forgotten.’

He shouldered his knapsack, wrung Nicholas’s hand for the last time, gave him a hearty blessing, and walked away upon the white high-road with that swinging stride of his, which showed how easy such exercise was to him.

It was a glorious summer day—the blue bright sky without a cloud, the warm earth breathing perfume. This village among the hills—two straggling rows of cottages bordering a broad high-road—seemed to be set upon the apex of this western world. There lay the bright green sea, ever so far below yonder dip in the broad fields, that stretched away to the edge of the cliff. No indication of the rock-bound shore below—the craggy arches and

peaks and ragged boulders—was to be seen from here; only cornfields and meadows sloping to the cliff, and in the distance a battlemented mansion, rising from the soil, gaunt and lonely, like the castle of Giant Blunderbore.

Never had Joshua Haggard been in a happier frame of mind than on this fair June morning. He loved the sunshine, the soft westerly breeze, which warmed him even more than the sun. It was some hereditary instinct, perhaps, from his Spanish forefathers, some innate love of sunburnt sierras and a torrid sky, that made him so fond of the breathless midsummer weather and the fierce noontide sun. He walked on for a good many miles without a halt, and in this solitary walk fell into meditation upon his family and their prospects. That conversation yesterday afternoon with Nicholas Wild had set him thinking about his daughter and Oswald Pentreath.

He was not an ambitious man, either for himself or for his children. He was not a man who sought for earthly distinctions or set his affections on the things of this world. Yet it pleased him to think that his daughter might be raised in the social scale

by marriage with a gentleman and a man who took his rank from the land. In the minds of these country people there is a natural love of the soil which makes landed estate seem to them above all other fortune. A manufacturer with a million would have been a very small man at Comhaven compared with Squire Pentreath, whose race had occupied the land from time immemorial.

‘Why should he not choose her for his wife?’ argued Joshua. ‘She is a lady in education and principle. She has the manners of a lady, and beauty that is given to few women, be their rank of the highest. As for fortune—well, I could give her enough to make the marriage no imprudent one for Oswald Pentreath. I must get to understand the state of that young man’s feelings. Judith may be right after all. We have been going on too easily, perhaps. I must ascertain the old Squire’s sentiments. I will not have my daughter trifled with or slighted.’

Having come to this conclusion, Joshua Haggard dismissed the subject. He was too clear-brained and definite to go on revolving his ideas in a mill.

There had never yet been confusion or perplexity in his mind upon any subject: no question had ever arisen that he not been able to grapple with and answer satisfactorily. But then, as he himself said to Nicholas Wild, his life journey had been an easy one. Heretofore Fate had given him no hard riddles to solve. But every man in his time meets the Sphinx, and must answer or die. Joshua's time had not yet come.

Very beautiful was that far Cornish land in the summer noon—a large wild beauty, but neither desolate nor gloomy. The undulating fields had a fertile prosperous look, the patches of common were golden with furze, and all the water-pools shone like ewels under that bounteous glorifier of all things, the sun. Three miles short of Penmoyle, a village made dear to him by pleasant youthful memories, and where he had determined to take his rest, Joshua Haggard turned aside from the sandy road, little better than a lane on this steep hill-side, and strolled on to a bit of rugged common-land, all hillock and hollow, with water here and there in the deeper hollows, and furze ablaze upon all the hil-

locks. Here, he thought, was a pleasant place for half an hour's repose. He had walked seven or eight miles, and had three more to walk to Penmoyle, where he meant to dine with some of his old friends. The Penmoyle dinner-hour would be over by an hour or two when he arrived, but the land was full of plenty. There would be a slice of corned beef or Cornish ham or a wedge of cold pasty at his service, to say nothing of crisply-baked cakes, fried potatoes and bacon—luxuries which the minister's soul renounced as dangerous, savouring too much of Esau's fatal feast.

Nothing could be prettier in its own peculiar way than that little bit of common on the top of the sandy hill. Perhaps it was its peacefulness that made it so lovely, or the summer atmosphere, in itself so delicious that it would have beautified a desert. There was a silence, save of sweet vague summer sounds: the humming of insects, the whispering of that soft west wind, and presently, bursting out with a shrill gush, the carol of the skylark aloft, a speck in the dazzling blue.

Joshua Haggard sighed the sigh of utter con-

tentment as he stretched himself on the mossy turf (the soil here grew more moss than grass), and inhaled the almond perfume of the furze—a warm sweetness, as if those golden butterfly blossoms smelt of the sun that had given them their colour and their bloom.

It seemed as if that sigh of his woke the sleeping nymph of the scene; for there came in answer to it a faint fluttering sound like the rustle of a woman's garment—no *frôlement* or *frou-frou* of rich silken tissue, but a little fluttering noise of softer humbler drapery, such as poor folks wear.

Joshua Haggard turned his head a little way, and looked across the ragged clump of furze that topped the hillock on which he had thrown himself. There was a tiny pool of water in the hollow below, and on the other side of the hillock sat a girl, bare-headed under the summer sun, a little bundle lying on the turf beside her, her bare feet in the water. They shone ivory white under that clear water, and Joshua's heart gave a curious thrill—half fear, half wonder—as if he had seen a fairy.

There came back to his memory stories that he

had loved in his childhood, before he had grown to believe that there were no other stories save Bible stories that were good for a man to read or admire. Dimly there came back to him a legend of a summer noontide such as this, and a princess transformed by wicked arts into a beggar wench washing her toil-worn feet by the wayside.

He could not see the girl's face as he looked down the slope on which she sat, with her back to the hillock and to him; but he saw she had the princess's long fair hair, fair as flax, and bright as the silk his children used to wind from the cocoons of their silkworms in the autumn evenings a few years ago.

'I am not much like the prince who met the disguised princess,' he thought, smiling at his fancy, 'nor yet like the lucky adventurer I used to read of in those fairy books. Poor child! I daresay she is some miner's daughter, who has been over the hills yonder to carry her father his dinner. I wonder whether she has ever read her Bible. I used to teach many such fair-haired children when I was in this part of the country years ago.'

The furze rustled as he bent over to look down at that sunlit head with its loose flaxen hair, and the girl started and looked up at him, and gave a little cry of fear on seeing that dark intent face bent above her.

She took her feet hastily out of the water, snatched her bundle, and sprang up as if about to fly; but Joshua stepped quickly down from the hillock and stood beside her.

‘Why are you running away, child? Are you afraid of me?’

She looked up at him with great blue eyes—those rare eyes that are absolutely blue, the azure of the summer sky—looked up at him in evident terror.

‘Let me go,’ she cried, as his strong hand grasped her arm, gently but firmly.

‘My child, I have no desire to detain you. But you mustn’t run away from me as if I were some terrible monster. I will not do you any harm. I would do you good if I could, poor wandering lamb. Alas, I fear the world has not used you kindly, or the sight of a strange face would not scare you so.’

‘ You won’t take me back to them ?’ cried the girl, with a shudder.

‘ I will take you nowhere that you do not wish to go. But who are these people whom you fear so much ?’

‘ The people I belong to.’

‘ Your father and mother ?’

‘ No. I never had a father or mother—not to know them.’

‘ Who are these people, then ?’

‘ The strollers. I was at Helston fair with them yesterday ; and I ran away and slept under a haystack last night, and came on here this morning ; and O, please, please, please, good gentleman, don’t take me back to them !’ she cried, clasping her hands piteously.

‘ Strolling players—mountebanks, you mean ?’

‘ Yes. They act, and dance, and tumble at fairs and places ; and they have some horses, and sometimes they call themselves a circus ; and they made me dance on the horses’ backs and jump through hoops. I fell once, and was nearly killed : it was only the sawdust saved me, they said.’

‘Poor child! Have you been with them long?’

‘All my life,’ answered the girl, opening those innocent blue eyes. ‘I belong to them. I never had any other home or any other friends.’

‘My poor lost lamb! And were they unkind?’

The girl’s red under-lip—fuller than the upper, like Sophia Western’s—pouted a little as she meditated this question.

‘They never starved me,’ she said; ‘they did not beat me often.’

‘But they did sometimes strike you?’ cried the minister indignantly.

‘Yes, when I was stupid and could not learn what they wanted. I was fond of the horses and the jumping through hoops, though it was dangerous; but they wanted me to learn tricks with cards, and conjuring. I was stupid at that: the numbers puzzled me. And then the Black Captain—he’s the master of us all—used to get into a passion, and hit me, and swear at me—such dreadful words.’

The very recollection was appalling, for she burst into tears and sobbed passionately for a minute or two. Joshua was accustomed to be the confidant

and consoler of other people's troubles. He patted this wanderer gently on the shoulder, and comforted her with a few soothing words.

'You shall not go back to these people, child, if I can prevent it,' he said; 'and you shall learn to read your Bible. You have never learned that, I fear.'

'Is that the book people read in the churches?' she asked.

'Yes, and in chapels, and in every Christian home.'

'What's that?' asked the girl wonderingly; 'I don't know what it means.'

Then Joshua tried in simplest, easiest phrases to tell her what Christianity meant, and what its Founder had done for men. She listened meekly, and understood some part of what he said; but even that much was dimly comprehended by her. The veil of ignorance which shrouded her young mind was too dense to be penetrated easily by the light of truth.

'Tell me how you came to belong to these strollers,' said Joshua presently.

'I don't know. I belonged to them always.'

'You have no memory that goes back beyond

that strolling life? Your mind cannot pierce to something behind that—far away—half forgotten—a different life, a fixed home?’

‘No. The first thing I can remember is a little close room upon wheels, a room that was always moving, the hedges and trees going by outside. I used to watch them move. I thought it was the road that moved, not us; and I remember the little dark corner where I slept, squeezed in by the wall, and how I used to be almost smothered sometimes. That was when my first mother was alive. She was kind to me, and I loved her dearly; but she used to get tipsy sometimes, poor thing. She danced on the slack-rope, and she was very clever. She had been a rope-dancer in London, they said; and one night at Truro she had been drinking, and lost her balance and fell from the rope, and hurt her head against a post, and she was very bad, and soon after she died.’

Tears came into the girl's eyes as she told of her protectress's fate.

‘How do you know that this woman was not really your mother?’ asked Joshua.

‘Because they all told me I had no father or mother. I don’t know how they came by me, but I belonged to them, and none of them belonged to me. Somebody once said they had bought me. When Susannah Beck was dead I had another mother, called Harriet Long; and she was cruel, and used to beat me if I didn’t learn the steps or the songs she taught me quick enough. She was a dancer too, but on the ground, not on ropes; and she sang and acted, and tried to do everything. She didn’t drink like poor Susannah, but she was greedy for money, and used to make me go round with a tambourine among the crowd begging, when the Black Captain—he did the tumbling—wasn’t looking, and then used to take the money from me; and one day the Captain heard of it, and he beat her and me too, and then she took a dislike to me, and used to be very cruel; and then I grew up, and she said I was too big for my business; and then I made up my mind to run away the first time I could get off; and I watched and waited; and last night, at Helston, Harriet was asleep in the van, and the others were almost all tippy, and I crept out into the fields. It was warm

and starlight ; I felt quite happy. I ran for a long, long way, till I heard the sea washing against the rocks ; and then I came to a farm, and crept in among some loose hay beside a haystack, and it smelt so sweet, and I forgot that I was hungry, and fell asleep ; and when I woke the sun was shining, and a little field-mouse was looking at me with its bright eyes, and I was ever so much hungrier.'

' Poor child ! Have you had nothing to eat since then ?'

' Yes ; a woman in a village I came through gave me a great thick slice of bread-and-cheese.'

' Good woman ! And now tell me what you mean to do ?'

' To work in the fields, if they will let me.'

' Field-labour ! You don't look much like that. Show me your hands.'

She laid a thin little hand confidingly in Joshua's broad brown palm. Quite a delicate hand, sunburnt on the outside, but with a soft pink palm and filbert-shaped nails ; a hand that had done no hard work, and which, according to a popular theory, might be taken as a sign of a good lineage.

‘My child, you were never made for field-labour,’ said the minister, with kindly seriousness; ‘we must find some other work for you. It would be better for you to be a servant, if any one would be patient with you and teach you for a little while. I feel sure you are teachable.’

‘I learnt all but the card tricks,’ exclaimed the girl innocently. ‘I know the rabbit trick, and I learnt the nosegay trick and the pocket-handkerchief trick very quickly; but the numbers were so puzzling.’

‘Are you clever at your needle?’

‘Nobody ever taught me to work. I used to mend the dresses sometimes, and sew on gold lace and spangles; but I’m afraid the stitches weren’t very neat—they used to be so big.’ And the damsel measured off a Brobdignagian stitch on her slender forefinger.

‘You might be taught to work. You might be taught almost anything, I am sure,’ mused Joshua, looking intently at the fair sweet face so delicately, purely chiselled, with the pearly tints of a Greuze and the azure eyes he so loved to paint—just that

exquisite ideal of girlhood's innocence which approaches as nearly as earthly mould can come to the angelic, and which may mean much or little. So innocent, so artless, so unconscious, so divinely lovely may Gretchen have appeared to the student in that vision in the witch's kitchen. This girl was of the Gretchen type, that fair Saxon beauty which seems made for love, and to have lived its hour and fulfilled its end when it has won its first lover. It was not the Cleopatra beauty, created to subjugate and hold a triad of heroes, but the transient perfection of a rose in June, which blooms once and for one only.

'If you will trust me and come with me, I will get you more fitting work than field-labour,' said Joshua; 'I have plenty of friends in the next village, and I shall find some one who will give you food and shelter for my sake. You will have to work for your bread of course, and to be obedient.'

'I always did what Harriet told me,' answered the girl. 'I will do anything to earn my bread.'

'Anything that is honest,' replied the minister's grave voice. 'I hope you know the difference between right and wrong.'

‘I know that it is wrong to tell lies or to steal, but most of our people did it.’

‘You did not, I hope?’

‘No. I tried to tell a lie once, but the words wouldn’t come. Something inside me seemed to rise against it. I felt as if I should choke; and I thought after all they could only beat me, and then I told them the truth.’

‘That was brave and good of you. And when you have learnt to read your Bible you will love truth still more, and you will know many things that you do not know now.’

‘I’m afraid that will be a long time,’ said the girl despondently, ‘for I don’t know any letters except those our clever pony knew. It was he that taught me to count.’

‘A pony taught you?’

‘Well, perhaps I taught myself when I had to show the pony. “Now, Mr. Macaroni, show us number ten,” I used to say; and the pony used to put his hoof upon the card with the number; and he could tell the days of the week, and a lot more.’

‘You shall learn to read your Bible, my child,

and to work with your needle, and to be industrious in proper useful duties; and you must forget all about the pony.'

'Poor Macaroni!' sighed the girl. 'I was very fond of him. He used to put his kind old nose upon my shoulder, and against my cheek; and I used to fancy that he pitied me. He was so clever, you see. I think he knew I was unhappy.'

'What is your name, my dear child?' inquired Joshua thoughtfully. Even in Penmoyle some kind of introduction would be necessary, and it would be as well to make sure of his *protégée's* name before he presented her to his friends in that village.

'O, I've had ever so many names,' answered the girl frankly. 'Sometimes they called me Mamselle Fantini, and sometimes The Little Wonder.'

'O, dear, those outlandish names would not do,' exclaimed Joshua. 'Were you never baptised?'

'If that's anything to do with church, I should think not,' replied the girl. 'But they used to call me Cynthia generally. Perhaps that was my name.'

'Cynthia! It's not a common name; but it is pretty enough, and it will do.'

They have rather a leaning to fine names in Cornwall; and Mr. Haggard was not appalled by this fanciful name of Cynthia, even for a servant-girl.

‘Come,’ he said, looking at his big silver watch, a huge machine in a double case, ‘if you’ve rested enough, we had better be moving on.’

‘You are not going to take me back to them?’ asked the girl again, with an affrighted look.

‘My child, can you not understand that an honest man’s yea or nay is as good as an oath? I have promised not to give you back to your people. I am going to take you where you may earn your living, and learn to be a Christian.’

‘Is that as hard as conjuring?’ asked Cynthia simply.

‘O child, child, what sad darkness—here, in this land of light! What need to seek far away for the heathen, when we have them round us, near us, calling upon us mutely, like dumb creatures neglected and in pain?’

Cynthia had dried her bare feet on the sun-scorched grass—such pretty little feet, arched and slender. If such feet were put up at auction at

Christie and Manson's, peeresses would be racing one another for them. She tied on a pair of dilapidated boots, the most miserable things, which hung round her feet like ragged sandals. Had she been Scotch or Irish she would have gone barefoot, and been comfortable; but being an English girl, these apologies for shoes seemed to her better than nothing.

She took up her little bundle again, and was ready to follow her new friend. They stood side by side under that cloudless blue, the lark singing loud and clear, bees humming, sweet wild flowers abloom under their feet, the distant sea gleaming yonder above the hills, like a strip of brightness against the sky. They seemed alone upon this lonely earth, alone under that azure heaven; of human voices there was no sound, only the glad chorus of Nature—bird and insect, waving trees and falling waters.

'Come,' said Joshua again; and they walked down to the white road side by side and in silence.

CHAPTER VI.

CYNTHIA GOES INTO SERVICE.

‘ You are not too tired to walk three miles farther ?’ Joshua asked kindly, when Cynthia and he had gone a little way along the sunny road.

‘ O, no ; I have rested, and my feet don’t ache as they did before I bathed them.’

‘ You were very tired when you sat down to rest on that common.’

‘ Very tired. I felt as if I should like to have lain down by the roadside, and never get up any more. I thought that perhaps I should go on walking all day, and at night, when I was quite worn out, I should find a haystack, like the one where I slept last night, and I should lie down among the sweet-smelling hay, and never wake any more. I would rather have slept for ever than waked to go back to Harriet and the Black Captain.’

‘You shall never go back to them. If your father and mother are not amongst them, they can have no claim on you. Remember that always. I shall place you with some good and kind people; and if ever those strollers find you, and try to take you away, you must refuse to go with them. You are mistress of your own life; they have no right to take you.’

‘Ah, but you don’t know how strong the Captain is,’ said the girl despondingly.

Joshua saw that she was not yet capable of learning that lesson of self-reliance which he wished to teach. She was not much more than a child in years, and had but a child’s knowledge of life.

‘Have no fear of the Captain or any one else,’ he said, ‘so long as you learn to read your Bible, and do your duty by the light that will give you. This Black Captain is a gipsy, I suppose?’

‘He is very dark, with a skin like copper, and black eyes—O, such cruel eyes!—and he wears gold rings in his ears.’

‘Forget that you ever saw him,’ said Joshua. ‘I doubt if he will ever trouble your life again.’

He was thinking what a transformation domestic life would make in this wild flower he had found by the wayside. That flaxen hair, now falling in picturesque disorder over the girl's neck and shoulders, would be neatly bound up under a thick muslin mob-cap. A pity to hide anything so pretty; but then 'it is good for a woman's head to be covered;' and a flower in a well-kept garden cannot bloom in Nature's profuse beauty like the starry traveller's joy in the hedges. A neat cotton gown, muslin neckerchief, and large white apron would replace those disorderly rags, which now hung loosely on the slender figure. Her old companions would hardly recognise the runaway in this decent attire, should chance bring them to Penmoyle, which lay off the beaten tracks, and was about the sleepest place imaginable.

Joshua began the walk at his usual pace of four miles an hour, but soon discovered that his companion was flagging, and altered his step to suit hers. They were an hour and a half walking those three miles, and the minister questioned Cynthia still more closely upon her past life—that comfort-

less wandering childhood, which held no sunny memories of childish pleasures; that unprotected girlhood, among dark scenes and dark minds. He found her a poor benighted creature, ignorant of all those things which, in his mind, were most needful or most hallowed; but he found no evil in her. She had lived among sinners, yet seemed to have remained sinless. No unclean or degrading thought shaped itself upon those lovely lips. It seemed to Joshua that in her beauty and youth there was a spiritual purity, which, even in contact with unholy things, had escaped all contamination.

Their way lay along a parched high-road, sometimes up hill, sometimes down hill. They were within half a mile of Penmoyle, when they turned into a narrow lane, between tall ragged hedges full of dog-roses and honeysuckle.

‘Is this the way to the place where I’m to stop?’ asked Cynthia, very tired.

‘Yes; we are very near the village now.’

‘Do you live there?’

‘No. My home is in Devonshire, a long way off.’

‘I’m sorry for that. I would rather have been your servant than any one else’s, because you are so good to me.’

The soft blue eyes looked up at him full of trust; sweeter eyes, it seemed to him, than had ever been lifted to his face before.

Perhaps that Cornish village of Penmoyle was as sleepy a place as one could easily discover upon this varied earth. There was no reason for its existence save that the fields must be tilled, and flocks and herds tended, and that the human beasts of burden who perform those agricultural duties must live somewhere. Yet slumberous, sequestered as it was, Penmoyle had a completeness and beauty with which Providence has not endowed all Cornish villages. It was an ancient settlement, and had its old priory church and its patron saint, and there were yet traces of the priory that had first given the spot name and dignity. It was the centre of a fertile oasis amid the wild hills, and the meadows round about were full of fatness. On one side of the village street was the post-office; on the other an^{*} old rambling

inn, with a good deal of empty stabling. Opposite the inn stood a clump of horse-chestnuts—noble old trees which made a shadow and a darkness beneath them, where the tramp and wanderer lay down to rest in sultry August noontides, and forgot all weariness and care under those spreading boughs, and where the village children played at sundown. To the right of this chestnut-grove stood the village dame-school — not a free institution, but a self-supporting academy, which exacted fourpence a week from its scholars—a white wooden cottage with neat latticed casements and green palings; a lattice porch, myrtle-shaded; a green door and brass knocker, exactly like the door of a doll's-house; a wicker birdcage in the right parlour window, and a brazen one in the window on the left; a row of geraniums and mignonette in vermilion pots on every window-sill.

It was three o'clock, and a Saturday afternoon, when Joshua Haggard and his companion entered the village. School was over for the week, and the voices of the children pealed shrilly from beneath the chestnut leafage. Joshua went straight to that

myrtle-shadowed porch and knocked with the shining brass knocker ; the girl standing a little way behind him, wondering at his audacity in approaching such a splendid abode.

The door was opened by a spinster of middle age, tall and thin, with dark hair neatly arranged in little bunches of stiffly-curling ringlets on each side of her small square forehead. She wore a flowered-challis gown, which Cynthia considered absolutely beautiful ; and her neat waist was zoned by a broad ribbon band, flowered to match the challis, tightly clasped by a large gilt buckle. Her square muslin collar was trimmed with pillow-lace, and her brooch was a jewel to wonder at. Round her brow she wore a circlet of narrow black velvet, and the ends of her long gold earrings touched her shoulders. Her eyes were black and bright like jet beads ; her nose sharp and of noticeable length ; her complexion russet and ruddy, like a winter apple.

At sight of Joshua she gave a shrill scream, expressive at once of wonder and delight.

‘ My ! ’ she exclaimed, ‘ did I ever ? Who would have thought ? Debbie dear, come here. ’

This summons to somebody unseen was shrieked in a still higher key; and from the little parlour to the right emerged a second figure in a challis gown, so like the first in person and in all outward adornments that Cynthia stared from one to the other, transfixed by astonishment.

They were not twin sisters, these middle-aged maidens; but sisters who live together and have their garments cut off the same piece are apt to become the image of each other. The Miss Weblings had spent five-and-forty years of life in constant companionship. They thought alike; ate and drank the same things, and by the same measure; dressed alike, walked alike, spoke alike, and uttered the same ejaculations with the simultaneousness of a single machine.

Deborah threw up her hands and eyebrows on beholding Mr. Haggard, exactly as Priscilla had done a minute earlier.

‘My!’ she cried. ‘To think, now! Did you ever?’

Then followed a perfect gush of rejoicing from both spinsters, who took the minister between them

and drew him into the best parlour. Both parlours were the pink of neatness, and ornate after their manner, but the parlour in which the brazen canary cage hung was the best *par excellence*. It was the room for Sunday-afternoon occupation and stately tea-drinkings, the room in which to lay the dessert on Christmas-day.

‘The cowslip wine, Priscilla,’ cried the elder sister.

‘And the seedy-cake, love,’ added the younger.

Cynthia stood in the porch all this time, mutely wondering.

‘And what blessed Providence has brought you this way, dear sir?’ asked Deborah, while Priscilla unlocked a closet in the wainscot which was half as large as the room, and produced therefrom a decanter of dark-brown wine, and a seed-cake in a green dessert-plate.

Mr. Haggard explained his mission in the west briefly, while Priscilla filled a glass of wine and cut a wedge of cake.

‘And you came this way on foot on purpose to see old friends,’ said Deborah. ‘How good of you!’

You don't know how we have missed your blessed teaching, and thought and talked of you since you were last to Penmoyle. Do you find the place improved?' she asked, with an air of latent pride.

'It looks as pretty and as peaceful as ever,' replied Joshua.

'O, but didn't you take notice? They've built a new house on the left-hand side as you come from the Truro road. It makes quite an addition to the place. And Mrs. Simmons at the shop has enlarged her window, and has painted herself up a bit outside; and the church vane has been gilded. We were quite busy last spring, I assure you.'

'And your school? I hope that has been going on prosperously?'

'We've been very well off for pupils, but I'm afraid children get slower and duller every year. It seems harder work to teach 'em. If we hadn't the comfort of knowing that we've got a nice little bit of property laid by, it would be too wearing. But when one knows one's old age is provided for, one can bear a good deal. You've come to make a bit of a stay, I hope, Mr. Haggard?'

‘No, indeed; I’m sorry to say I’m not free to do that. I must get across to Truro in time for the night coach, for I must be at Combhaven for service to-morrow. There’s no one to minister to my flock when I’m away.’

On this followed lamentations from both sisters. They had hoped that he would stay; that he would preach in their tabernacle, which was a little bit of a building with a sloping roof, next door to the shop—a building that had begun life as a stable.

‘I want to see all old friends at Penmoyle,’ said Joshua, this village having been one of his favourite abiding places in the days of his Cornish wanderings; ‘but I came to you first, Miss Webling, because I’ve a favour to ask of you. There’s a girl outside—’

‘Yes, I saw her,’ cried Priscilla eagerly, ‘a tramp. And she’s there still, I declare,’ looking sideways at the porch. ‘Was there ever such impudence?’

‘I brought her,’ said Joshua.

‘You! I thought she had been begging of you. She looks an awful character.’

‘I do not believe there is any harm in her,’ said the minister; ‘and then remember who said that He

was sent to the lost sheep of Israel. It is the duty of His ministers to seek and to save those that are lost. I found that stray lamb by the wayside.'

'Ah, dear Mr. Haggard, I'm afraid she has imposed upon your goodness.'

'I don't think so. I have questioned her closely, and she seems to me innocent and good, little more than a child in years, and in sore need of help and protection. Now it struck me, my kind friends, that you would be the very people to help her.'

'We! O Mr. Haggard, when you know that we never could abide a grain of dust about our place! A creature like that, with ragged yellow hair, and not a thing upon her that isn't in tatters! What could we do for her?'

'Take her in and make her clean and clothe her comfortably, and teach her to read her Bible and earn her living honestly. That's what I want you to do, Miss Webling.'

'But consider, Mr. Haggard, the children. A creature with hair like that! What an example for them!'

'Twist her hair up into a knob like your own, or

cut it off if you like, only make a Christian of her. You used to feel an interest in missionary work, Miss Priscilla.'

'Yes, dear Mr. Haggard, but I never held with mixing things that ought to be kept separate. Converting the heathen is a good and gracious work, but you don't want to mix up heathens with ready-made Christians. Of course there's very little Deborah and I wouldn't do to oblige you; still at the same time—'

'Put me out of the question, Miss Priscilla, and think of the higher motive. "I was a stranger, and ye took me in." That poor child is waiting all this time, and I know she is faint and tired. Take her in and do what you can for her, and I'll tell you her story afterwards.'

Priscilla looked at Deborah and Deborah at Priscilla, and then both maidens looked askance out of the window, descrying Cynthia's drooping figure through the lattice of the porch.

'She looks tired,' said Deborah, 'and she doesn't look as if there was much harm in her, as tramps go. She doesn't look violent.'

'It would go against us to refuse you anything, Mr. Haggard,' said Priscilla. 'But when we have dressed her comfortably and given her a good meal, what are we to do with her?'

'We'll settle that afterwards. Teach her to be your servant, if you can. She looks bright and teachable. You have no servant, I think?'

'No. We've tried a girl more than once; but girls are more trouble than they're worth, and make more dirt than they clean. What would such a girl as that be, I should like to know?'

'Perhaps better than the common run of girls. She seems to me to have more than the common intelligence.'

'Well,' said Miss Webling decisively, 'to oblige you, dear Mr. Haggard, we'll call her in and make her decent, and give her something to eat. That reminds me that I've a question to ask you,' added the spinster, with solemnity. 'Have you dined?'

'I did very well as I came along,' replied Joshua evasively; 'but I am ready to admit that a slice of cold pasty would be acceptable.'

'You shall have it hot in less than half an hour.'

There's a couple of pasties in the oven. We always bake on Saturday, so as to have something cold for Sunday. They'll be ready in about twenty minutes. You can lay the cloth in the other room, Priscilla, while I see to the young woman.'

'If I hadn't known you were a good soul, I shouldn't have come here to-day, Miss Webling,' said Joshua, with a grateful look.

Deborah went back to the neat little passage, and opened the door. The girl looked up at her with rather an alarmed expression. This image of feminine respectability had something of a Gorgon-like aspect to her, although she vastly admired the flowered-challis gown and the brazen buckle.

'Come in and be washed, young woman,' said Deborah, somewhat sternly; and the address was so alarming that Cynthia shrank away a little, and would perhaps have refused the invitation, if Joshua had not put his head out of the adjacent parlour just at this moment.

'You will do whatever this kind lady tells you, my child,' said the minister, with mild authority; and on this Cynthia obeyed as meekly as a lamb, and

followed Miss Webling into the back premises at the end of the narrow passage. Here they came to a neat brick-floored kitchen, with a grate and oven-door that shone like a jeweller's shop; and beyond that there was a secondary kitchen or scullery, also brick-floored, with a stone sink and a pump in one corner, a copper in another, and a couple of washing-tubs in a third. It was into this chamber of purification that Deborah conducted the wanderer.

She hoisted one of the washing-tubs upon the sink, after turning up her scanty gown and pinning it round her waist by way of preparation, and pumped it nearly full of the pure spring water.

'There,' she said, showing the girl a little wooden soap-bowl, 'there are soap and water for you; and now, if you've any notion of cleanliness, take advantage of your opportunity.'

'I shall be very glad to wash the dust off, thank you, ma'am,' answered the girl submissively.

Miss Webling cast a glance round her scullery, as if to ascertain that there was nothing convenient for surreptitious removal; and then left the stroller

to her ablutions, after pointing out the round towel, a most uncompromising strip of huckaback.

‘When you’ve made yourself thoroughly clean you can come into my kitchen,’ said Miss Webling, ‘and I’ll see what I can do for you in the shape of clothes.’

‘Thank you, ma’am. I should like a flowery gown like yours,’ replied the girl innocently.

‘Nonsense, child. This was my Sunday gown for the last three years. I’ve only just taken to it for workaday afternoons.’

And Miss Webling departed, locking the scullery door upon her doubtful guest.

Priscilla was in the kitchen, putting some things upon a tray to lay the cloth, and Mr. Haggard had gone out to look up some of his old friends pending the preparation of his meal.

‘Come up-stairs with me, Prissy, and let us see if we can find anything for this girl,’ said Deborah; and the two maidens ascended a corkscrew staircase to their lavender-scented bedchamber, and there knelt side by side before a large trunk, in which they kept their superannuated clothing. Everything

had been neatly folded and carefully put away, and there was a perfume of rose-leaves and spices among the folds of linen and woollen stuff. The sisters made their selection very carefully, pondering long over certain garments, and then putting them back into the box again, as too good to be given away.

‘If we knew that a good use would be made of them, we should be more inclined to make a sacrifice,’ said Priscilla; ‘but a creature of that kind may sell them directly she has left us.’

Finally, after much serious discussion a choice was made: such curious antiquated under-garments, with a great deal of frilling, the fabric yellow with age; a gown of printed cotton, and of a pattern which the modern mind associates with bed-furniture, and which would be hard to find nowadays hanging in long wet strips from the lofty ceilings of Hoyle’s Printing Works, or rotating upon endless webs, or being boiled into a pulpy state in giant coppers.

Miss Webling went back to the kitchen with the bundle of clothes, unlocked the door of the scullery, and told her prisoner to come forth: The spinster’s

love of the beautiful had not been developed by culture, yet even she was moved to admiration at the vision which appeared at her call.

The girl's fair face was glowing and rosy from the bath, her eyes shone clear and bright, her lips were the colour of opening rosebuds, her sunny hair hung over her shoulders in rippling showers, her neck and arms were pure as ivory against the dark bodice of her ragged petticoat. She had not put on the tattered blue-and-white cotton gown which had served as her outer garment.

'Gracious!' exclaimed Miss Webling, 'you look all the better for a little soap and water. Come here, Prissy, and let's make her as decent as we can.'

Priscilla came, armed with a very hard brush and a bone comb. Deborah laid a newspaper upon the bright red bricks, and bade the girl sit down on a little three-legged stool with her feet on the paper, lest those dusty shoes of hers should sully the bricks, which had been reddened that morning. Then Priscilla came with her brush and operated upon the stroller's hair, taking up the soft flaxen tresses in a gingerly manner.

Finding that soft hair very clean she began a vigorous brushing, and then twisted the long tresses in one compact rope, and wound them round in a hard ball at the back of the small head. This new arrangement curiously altered the character of the girl's face, and gave something of a puritan look to the fair oval countenance. All that was wild and picturesque in that girlish head had been scared away by Miss Priscilla's comb and brush.

'Now,' said Deborah approvingly, 'you begin to look decent.'

'It feels so strange to have a knob at the back of my head,' said Cynthia, shaking the tight lump of hair.

'Ah, I'm afraid you've come from a place where most Christian-like things are strange,' sighed Priscilla.

Then came the process of dressing. All the garments were too loose and too long for the slender figure, and had to be tied up and buttoned over and generally adapted as they were put on. When the gown came, that striped brown-and-yellow cotton, Cynthia gave a little shudder at its hideousness.

But it was whole, and her own was in tatters. She was obliged to feel grateful for the exchange. The huge leg-of-mutton sleeves almost swallowed her up, and one of Miss Webling's frilled collars hung over her shoulders like a small cape.

'You look clean and respectable,' said Deborah decisively, 'and that's a good deal to have done for you.'

Mr. Haggard had returned by this time. The table was laid in the every-day parlour, and the pasties had been taken out of the oven. They had a savoury smell, beef and potatoes and onions entering into their composition, and the crust was brown and crisp. Poor Cynthia looked at them with longing eyes, as Miss Webling reviewed them on the dresser, choosing the best baked for the minister's regalement.

Joshua seemed somewhat disinclined to sit down at the neatly-arranged table. He looked at his watch, made some calculation about the coach, walked to the window, looked absently out into the sunny street, and appeared unconscious that his meal was ready.

‘The pasty will be cold, dear Mr. Haggard,’ said Deborah, perplexed by this absence of mind.

‘I beg your pardon. Yes, the pasty looks excellent. By the way, that poor child; she has had nothing but a slice of bread since last night. She must be hungry. If she might have a bit of this excellent pasty, now.’

Miss Webling inwardly rebelled at the suggestion. What, this potato-pasty, which she had made with her own hands, of the choicest materials, and had baked with greatest care for Sabbath consumption! She remembered excusingly that Mr. Haggard had always been careless and unthinking about victuals.

‘I think if Priscilla were to cut her a plate of bread-and-cheese—’ she began.

‘This seems ever so much nicer,’ said the minister. ‘Let her come in here and have some. I want her to tell you her story, poor child; for I think she will win your sympathy by her artlessness.’

Miss Webling complied, inwardly reluctant. She opened the parlour door, and called,

‘Girl, come here.’

And then she cut a plateful of pasty, and set it on a little table under the wicker birdcage—a table apart. It was not to be permitted that a tramp should sit at table with the minister. The minister's Master may have sat at meat with curious people; but that was a long time ago, before manners had reached that extreme point of refinement to which they had attained at Penmoyle.

Cynthia came shyly, feeling in her brown-and-yellow gown as if she had been transformed into somebody else.

'Good gracious!' cried Joshua, not altogether approvingly; 'what have you done to her?'

'We have done our best to make her tidy,' replied Deborah, with dignity; 'but of course our things are not altogether befitting her station.'

'That wouldn't matter so much if they fitted her,' said Joshua; 'however, they are clean and whole, and I daresay she feels comfortable in them. Now, Cynthia, sit down and eat your dinner; and then you must tell these kind ladies all you told me on the common where I found you.'

Cynthia obeyed, and meekly took the place assigned by Miss Priscilla.

The pasty was very nice, and hunger made it absolutely delicious. The spinsters were shocked to see that Mr. Haggard's *protégée* put her fingers into the plate occasionally.

'She doesn't seem to know the use of a prong,' said Deborah; forks being graphically described as prongs at Penmoyle.

'She will learn everything in time,' answered Joshua kindly. That grave deep voice of his had never assumed a gentler tone, not even when he talked of his daughter.

Having eaten her dinner, Cynthia told the sisters her story—not quite so naïvely as she had told it to Joshua; but with a frankness which neither Deborah nor Priscilla—though inclined to look with the eye of suspicion upon a strolling young woman—could mistake. The history of this waif, fatherless, motherless, friendless, left outside the Christian fold, was touching enough to move some tender feeling in the village schoolmistresses.

'Now I will tell you what I want you to do for

her,' said Joshua. 'Take her as your servant and your pupil. Pay her no wages for her work, which will at first perhaps be worth very little. I will pay you for her schooling, and provide for her clothing. Let her learn to read her Bible, and to write a plain straightforward letter, and add up a column of figures. I ask for no more than that. Teach her to be handy with her needle, and a good servant. She is young enough and active enough to learn quickly and to be useful. And really, Miss Webling,' added the minister, making a final appeal to feminine pride, 'ladies of such refinement as yourself and your sister ought not to be without a domestic servant.'

'We've tried girls before now, Mr. Haggard, and found them nothing but worry. We've a woman come in twice a week to scrub, and red-brick, and hearthstone, and blacklead, and the rest we manage ourselves. A lady needn't be the less a lady because she knows how to use her hands.'

'Of course not,' said the minister; 'but with advancing years—'

Priscilla bridled and coughed dubiously.

'We don't pretend to be young women,' she exclaimed; 'but I don't think either Debbie or I feel age coming upon us yet awhile.'

Joshua perceived that he had made a mistake.

'However, to oblige you, Mr. Haggard,' said Deborah, 'I think we might go so far as to give the girl a trial. Of course coming to us without a character there's a risk. But she seems biddable; and I'll allow that there's a good deal of cleaning up after the children, what with dirty boots and suchlike, that I shouldn't be sorry to have taken off my hands. As for payment for teaching her to read her Bible, I don't think either Priscilla or I would like to take money for that; though I daresay we shall have to begin from the very beginning, and everybody knows that's uphill work. For the matter of clothes she may be beholden to you, Mr. Haggard; and you won't feel the expense of a dress piece now and then, or a dozen yards of calico, and two or three pair of worsted stockings for winter wear, as it's all in your line of business.'

'Certainly not,' said Joshua. 'It'll come lightly enough upon me. I thank you with all my heart,

Miss Webling, for your generous consent to oblige me. If Cynthia does not turn out well under your care it will be her own fault, and I shall feel no further interest in her.'

'I shall try very hard to please them, for your sake,' said Cynthia, looking up at him gratefully. O, what a lovely look it was, and how sweet is gratitude from eyes of heaven's own azure!

'These ladies will teach you to be a Christian, Cynthia,' said Joshua, 'and when I come to Penmoyle again I shall expect to hear you read a chapter in the Gospel.'

'When will you come again?' asked the girl eagerly.

'Next year, perhaps. I am always glad to come westward to see old friends.'

'A year? That's a long time.'

'Not long to people who are well employed,' answered Joshua. 'You will have a great deal to learn in the year, Cynthia, so time will pass quickly with you. You must learn to work with your head and your hands; learn to love and honour God, and do your duty to your neighbour.'

'I wish I was going with you,' said Cynthia.

'That's a foolish wish. I am leaving you with ladies who will be very kind to you.'

'She shall have the little room in the roof to sleep in,' said Deborah. 'The roof slopes a good bit, and she must take care not to hit her head against it; but it's high enough in the middle for her to stand upright, and the room's nice and warm under the thatch.'

'I don't care where I sleep,' said Cynthia. 'Anything would be better than the van, it was so close and stifling. I'll sleep under a haystack if you like, ma'am.'

'You must call me Miss,' said Deborah. 'I'm not a married lady. And now, Cynthia—what a queer name, to be sure!—see if you can clear the table nicely, and carry the dinner-things out without breaking anything, and then you must take the cloth out to the yard and shake it for the chickens. We never waste so much as a crumb, Cynthia, though we keep a liberal table.'

The girl obeyed, pleased to be occupied, and removed the plates and dishes quickly and carefully.

She had been a drudge in the tents of her wandering tribe, and had learned to be quick with her hands and feet. Deborah looked on quite approvingly.

‘She’s better than the girls we’ve had, I do declare,’ she said, when Cynthia had gone out to administer the fragments of the feast to the poultry, beginning to think that in doing a work of benevolence she was perhaps securing a positive advantage. This girl seemed handier than the miners’ or agricultural labourers’ daughters of the district, all of whom were exorbitant in their demands for wages, asking as much as a pound or even twenty-five shillings a quarter.

Joshua looked at his watch again. He had a twelve-mile walk between him and Truro, and the night coach left that town at ten. It was now five, and the village had that delicious look of repose which such places put on in the mellow light of afternoon.

‘I think I must be moving,’ said the minister.

‘O Mr. Haggard, not till you’ve had a cup of tea,’ cried Priscilla. ‘It’s past our time already, and the kettle’s on the boil. I’ll have tea ready in five

minutes, and perhaps you'd do us the favour to expound a chapter while the teapot draws. That's a privilege we don't often enjoy.'

She ran out to the kitchen, where Cynthia was folding the cloth neatly, showing quite a natural gift that way. Priscilla taught her how to set the tea-things—blue willow-pattern cups and saucers, shallow cups with high handles, and very beautiful in the girl's eyes. There was a white-and-gold covered bowl for the sugar, oval, with coloured landscapes on each side. Cynthia had never seen anything so lovely; and from a place of concealment in her bed-chamber Deborah brought down a glittering silver teapot with a black handle—a teapot that had belonged to the grandparents of the Weblings, and was in itself an evidence of respectability, a silver teapot in families of this class taking the place of a pedigree. This ancestral treasure was drawn forth from its wash-leather retirement to do honour to the minister.

Cynthia carried the tea-tray into the parlour, Priscilla following with the silver pot, lest by any chance the stroller being intrusted with it should

make a sudden rush to the front door, and levant with the family plate.

‘Sit down in that chair by the door, Cynthia,’ said Deborah when the tray had been placed, ‘and try to derive profit from Mr. Haggard’s teaching.’

Cynthia took the chair indicated, and sat with her great blue eyes fixed wonderingly on the minister, doubtful whether he was going to perform conjuring tricks with cards, or to manifest his knowledge of arithmetic and the days of the week like the learned pony.

The sisters seated themselves primly by the teatable, with folded hands and an expectant expression of countenance, as if ready to meet enlightenment half way with superior intelligence.

Joshua, seated easily, with one arm thrown across the back of his chair, opened his pocket Bible and began to read.

He chose that thrilling description of the last judgment which he had quoted to the sisters earlier in the afternoon. ‘And before Him shall be gathered all nations; and He shall separate them one from

another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.'

When he had read to the end of the chapter he preached his brief sermon on the text; a simple and touching commentary that drew tears from Deborah, who was the softer-hearted of the sisters, as Priscilla was the more learned and brilliant. Cynthia listened and wondered. She was too ignorant to be moved by the text; but when Joshua, after his own familiar personal fashion, set forth the duty of charity and compassion, his words came nearer to her heart, and a faint ray of light stole through the darkness of her mind. She clasped her hands, and looked gratefully from Joshua to the maiden sisters.

'And now you can go to the kitchen and sit there, Cynthia, till you are wanted to take away the tea-tray,' said Miss Webling, with condescending graciousness. 'I'll set you some needlework on Monday to employ your time of an afternoon;' on which Cynthia dropped a curtsy—she had learned to curtsy gracefully after her little dances in front of the booth—and retired.

'There's one thing I'm uneasy about,' said

Priscilla when she was gone. 'With a girl like that, who has dropped down from the skies, how can we ever feel secure about the silver?'

This family plate consisted of half a dozen attenuated tea-spoons, a pair of sugar-tongs like scissors, a muffineer, and the tea-pot.

'If I am any judge of character, that girl will not rob you,' said the minister. 'But you will soon be able to judge for yourselves. If she is honest in small things, depend upon it she will be honest in large. If she tells the truth, be sure she will not steal.'

Mr. Haggard praised the tea, of which he drank three cups, to the sisters' infinite gratification. There are few points upon which housekeepers are more assailable to flattery than on this of tea-making; and tea and sugar in those days were precious, costing much more than they do now, and the use of them implying gentility.

'And now I must really be going, my kind friends,' said Joshua. 'I shall not talk about my gratitude for your kindness to-day, though I do take it as a favour to myself; for you have done a Chris-

tian act, and will obtain your reward. I should like to say a few words to Cynthia before I go away.'

'Shall I call her?'

'No; I'll go to the kitchen and see her there.'

He went into the passage, and opened the door at the end of it. The kitchen faced the west, and was all of a glow with the afternoon sun. Roses and honeysuckle garlanded the low wide casement, and pots of yellow musk upon the sill perfumed the warm air. The red-floored kitchen, the dresser with its array of brightly-coloured crockery and shining tin and copper, made a Dutch picture; and in the mellow light of the casement stood Cynthia, looking dreamily out into the garden—a garden that sloped upwards in a gentle incline to the tall hedge that divided it from the pasture-land beyond. The hedges were white with elder-bushes in flower. There was a well in one corner, a pig-sty in another; and on a small square grass-plot in front of the kitchen-window a brood of soft yellow chicks were disporting themselves under the eye of a fussy Dorking hen.

'I have come to bid you good-bye, Cynthia,'

said Mr. Haggard kindly. 'You feel happy here, I hope?'

'Yes; it is so peaceful. I feel that no one will scold me or beat me. But I wish you were going to stay.'

'Why, my dear child?' asked Joshua, touched by the look of affection that accompanied the words rather than the words themselves. 'Of what good could I be to you? I could not teach you to sew and to be a clever domestic servant as these kind ladies can.'

'No; but I like you best,' replied Cynthia naïvely.

'I shall come to see you next summer, remember, my dear. It will please me very much if you have learnt to read your Bible by that time.'

'Then I'll learn,' replied Cynthia decisively.

'And to be useful and industrious. You must be obedient to your kind mistresses in all things, mind, for I am sure they will never bid you do anything that is not right. And you will attend the chapel twice every Sunday, and on week-day evenings whenever there is a service.'

‘ Yes ; I will do all you tell me.’

‘ God’s blessing and mine be upon you, dear child,’ said Joshua solemnly, laying his hand upon the girl’s soft hair ; ‘ and may He receive you among His chosen children and servants ! Good-bye.’

‘ Good-bye, sir,’ said Cynthia, dropping a low curtsy.

And so they parted ; and for many a day and many a month to come the minister carried the memory of that sunlit kitchen, with its rose-garlanded window, in his mind like a picture ; and the lines of the picture grew not less vivid with the progress of time.

CHAPTER VII.

NAOMI'S HOLIDAY.

MIDSUMMER had come and gone, and it was sultry August weather again, just a year after the loss of the Dolphin ; and life in the minister's house went smoothly on in its established course, every day the exact image of its defunct brother, yesterday. Joshua had been a little more watchful of Oswald and Naomi in consequence of that conversation with Nicholas Wild ; and, perceiving nothing in the manner of either that passed the bounds of friendly feeling, had refrained so far from any overt interference. When the time came he would be ready to speak and to act ; but it seemed to him that the time had not come. He was not going to offer his daughter to any man ; and to attempt to interrogate Oswald as to his feelings or his intentions would be in a manner to make such an offer. He had a hearty liking for

Oswald Pentreath, and he had confidence in the young man's honour and principle. The life of a man who lives in such a place as Combhaven is tolerably open to inspection, and no one had ever been able to charge Oswald with evil-doing. His pride, his supposed meanness, had been commented upon sharply enough by those who knew him least, and whose ideal squire was a rollicking young man with plenty of money to spend, and a leaning to getting tipsy in the company of his inferiors. But those who liked him least had no more to say than that he was close-fisted and proud; and the few who knew him well praised him warmly, and looked forward to the day when he should rule in his father's place.

Joshua Haggard, after duly considering these things, held his peace.

'I will bide my time, Judith,' he said, when his sister attacked him on the subject. 'I have seen no love-making between my daughter and Mr. Pentreath.'

'As if they'd let you see it!' exclaimed Judith. 'There's plenty of time for sweethearting behind

your back. In the wilderness of an evening, when he brings her plants with crackjaw names—such rubbish! not a flower among 'em equal to a marigold or a nasturtium—and ferns (ferns was nobody's money when I was a girl)—do you suppose that isn't sweethearting? And she seldom goes for an afternoon walk but what she meets him.'

'Combhaven isn't a large place,' said Joshua.

'Of course not; and it's easy for young people to make their plans and not miss each other.'

'Jim is always with his sister.'

'Yes, and with his eyes on every bird and bush, and he running off to climb trees half his time. I know that by the state of his clothes.'

'I can trust my daughter,' replied Joshua, with a dignity that silenced his sister. 'Naomi will keep no secret from her father.'

One evening early in this golden harvest month the minister took his daughter aside, and questioned her about Oswald Pentreath.

'We have made a new friend within the last year, Naomi,' he began—'a friend of whom you see rather more than I do. What do you think of him?'

The dark-fringed lids drooped over the thoughtful eyes, and a deep crimson glowed on the oval cheek.

‘ You mean Mr. Pentreath, father ?’

‘ Whom else should I mean, my dear ? We don't make many new friends. Tell me frankly how you like him.’

‘ Very much, father.’

‘ That's a straight answer, at any rate. Has he ever professed anything more than friendship for you—such friendship as any well-bred man may naturally feel for a superior young woman ?’

‘ Never !’

‘ And you think him good and true, Naomi ?’

‘ Indeed I do. I should be very sorry if any one thought otherwise of him.’

‘ Why, my love ? He is so little to us, that, except for charity's sake, it could matter little what people think of him.’

‘ I should be sorry if any one thought ill of him, because I know that he deserves people's good word. I know how good he is. I know how patient he is with his father,—how glad he would be to make

things better for the tenants; how dearly he loves his absent brother; how kind he is to all dumb things, and to Jim—and me.'

'He has my good opinion, Naomi, and I am glad to hear you speak well of him. But if ever he should seek to be more than your friend—if ever he were to change from friend to lover—you would tell me, wouldn't you, my dear?'

'Yes, father. I would not think of keeping a secret from you. You are always first in my thoughts.'

'There are some, doubtless, who would say I do wrong in allowing any friendship between you and Mr. Pentreath, on account of the disparity in your station. But to my mind, a young woman of high principles and good education is not the less a lady because her father happens to keep a shop; and although I cannot boast such a good old name as Pentreath, I think, by setting my good character against the Squire's bad repute, we may fairly balance the account.'

After this understanding with his daughter, Mr.

Haggard felt quite easy in his mind about Oswald Pentreath. He knew that Naomi had the higher and nobler nature; that union with her would be more elevation for Oswald; and he thought it a small thing that the conventionalities should be outraged a little by the marriage of the Squire's son with a grocer's daughter. Again, he had enjoyed so much respect and even reverence from his fellow-men in Combhaven, that he may naturally have fancied himself as great a man as the Squire. He knew that he was better liked and trusted, and that in any conflict between the two powers he could command a majority.

He had told his sister and his children that adventure of his on the way to Penmoyle. Naomi had listened with interest, warmly approving her father's conduct to the waif. Judith had taken a chilling view of the whole thing, and had opined that Joshua would live to repent his benevolence.

'I never knew any lasting good to come of mixing oneself up in other people's lives,' she said, with conviction. 'You set 'em going right for a little while, perhaps; but they're pretty sure to go wrong

again as soon as your back's turned. It's all very well to teach 'em—of course that's our duty; and no harm ever came of teaching, if it doesn't always do good. But when a minister goes beyond his sphere, and tampers with the bodily wants of any idle vagabond he may meet on his way, he's pretty sure to do mischief—at least that's my opinion.'

'Fortunately for the poor, it is not an opinion based upon the gospel,' replied Joshua.

'You don't find St. Paul going about the world getting situations for young women, and hampering himself with the expense of their clothing,' retorted Judith. 'He preached to them. That was his mission, and he stuck to it.'

Joshua took no trouble to defend his line of conduct in this matter. He was so far lord of himself and of his own life as to do what he pleased on all occasions, without any explanation of his motives. But when he came to pack a parcel of materials for Cynthia's clothing, Miss Haggard, who had the drapery business under her thumb, made herself a disagreeable as she could by picking out the ugliest printed goods, the coarsest calico, and flannel very

little superior to that which she dealt out to Sally for the washing of stone floors.

'If you must clothe paupers, clothe them suitably,' she remarked, as she bounced a piece of hideous print upon the counter, the pattern an ace of clubs on a dingy yellow ground.

'I won't have yellow,' said Joshua decisively, recalling that brown-and-yellow striped gown in which the Miss Weblings had arrayed his protégée.

'Nothing better to wear and wash,' replied Judith; 'and she'll want stuff that'll stand wear. Servant-girls can't afford to choose things for prettiness. I sold a gown off that piece to the housemaid at the Grange.'

'I'll choose for myself,' said Joshua, inspecting the shelves.

He selected two inoffensive patterns in a cool clean-looking lavender.

'That's one of the dearest pieces of goods we've got in stock,' objected Judith.

'I want something that will stand wear,' replied Joshua. 'Measure a gown off each of those while I look out something for Sundays.'

'She can wear this on Sunday, and plenty good enough, while it's clean.'

Joshua continued his examination of the shelves without noticing this remark, and presently pulled out a piece of printed stuff—quite a lady's pattern—white ground dotted with tiny pink rosebuds, fresh and innocent-looking.

'You are not going to cut that piece, surely, Joshua!' cried his sister, horrified. 'I've been saving that for Miss Tremaine. She wanted something neat and pretty for frocks for her nieces.'

'There'll be plenty left for Miss Tremaine's nieces after I've taken off a frock for Cynthia,' replied Mr. Haggard; and without another word to his sister he measured off the regulation quantity, and then changed the hop-sack calico and the coarse flannel for materials of fair and decent quality. Then he looked into the drawers under the counter, and chose a bonnet ribbon, and packed all these things securely in stout brown paper, for the Truro coach.

'I can't think what's come to you, Joshua, meddling with such fiddle-faddle,' said Judith discontentedly.

'I should have left it for you to do, Judith, if you had been disposed to do it with good grace,' answered Joshua calmly.

He wrote the address upon the parcel, and carried it to the Truro coach in his own hands, and gave it into the guard's keeping, with special instructions for its conveyance to Penmoyle. He experienced a mild thrill of happiness after doing this, such as a loving mother feels when she has sent some gift to a child at school.

Shortly after that confidential talk between Naomi and her father, Joshua Haggard gave his children a summer-day's outing, such as they had been accustomed to enjoy once or twice in every summer from their earliest childhood. It was a simple and inexpensive treat enough, consisting of a drive in the general-dealer's tax-cart to some distant town or village whither his duties, spiritual or temporal, or both combined, summoned the minister and shopkeeper. This August the holiday was to be a drive to Rockmouth, where there were one or two small shopkeepers who took their supplies from Joshua, and several families who derived their spiritual sus-

tenance from his lips, and who looked upon his expounding of the Scriptures as one of the rarest privileges of their lives.

To Jim these outings were particularly delightful; for while his father transacted his earthly business, and then went from cottage to cottage reading and exhorting, he and Naomi were free to wander where they listed, provided they arrived at the inn at the time appointed for the return journey. Aunt Judith also was wont to relax her Spartan severity on these occasions, and to prepare a liberal basket of provisions; that cold potato-pasty which the boy loved, or perchance a parsley-pie—a pie in which tender young chickens nestled in a bed of parsley and cream, preferable in the mind of a West-countryman to all the bloated goose-livers of Strasburg in their crockery piecrust.

This trip to Rockmouth had been talked of for at least a fortnight before Joshua could find a leisure day; so it was scarcely wonderful that the intended journey should be a fact familiar to Oswald Pentreath as well as to numerous other members of Combhaven society—notably the stout landlord of the

First and Last, who lived in his porch all summer time, and could see people's intentions through their open windows, if he did not become possessed of them in conversation.

The day came at last—glowing harvest weather and a sky without a cloud—when Joshua felt himself free to order Gray Dobbin to be harnessed in the cart. Off sped Jim to assist in the operation of harnessing; which performance gave rise to as many 'stand overs' and 'come ups' in the little stable-yard as if a whole team of impatient thoroughbreds had been getting on their leather. But when Gray Dobbin came out into the road, sleek and shining, with his dark mane symmetrically combed and glossy, his white hind feet pure as newly-fallen snow, ribbons at his ears, and an air of conscious pride in the carriage of his firm bull neck, James felt that his care had not been wasted, and the minister approved.

Naomi came tripping down the narrow staircase somewhat hurried and fluttered, for the trip had at last been decided upon hastily, but all aglow with beauty, in her cottage-bonnet—a kind of house or sentry-box, in which a woman sheltered herself in

those days, and lived secluded from the world, even while she took her walks abroad—and lilac-muslin dress, starched and ironed by her own industrious hands. The cottage-bonnet, of coarse Dunstable straw, was trimmed with white ribbon and lined with pale pink—such a bonnet as Eugénie Grandet wore when she took that dismal morning walk with her father; her petticoat was short enough to show the neat narrow feet in white stockings and ‘low shoes;’ her waist was short also; and a black-silk scarf crossed over her breast and tied behind completed her costume.

Her father contemplated her approvingly.

‘You and Dobbin have put on your best looks this morning,’ he said.

‘I always wear my best bonnet when I go out with you, father,’ answered Naomi meekly, but blushing a little at the thought that she had cherished a vague idea of Oswald’s appearance at the last moment, asking permission to accompany them on Herne the Hunter.

‘He could not know that we were going this morning,’ she told herself.

Naomi mounted to her seat in the cart, the post of honour beside the driver. Jim and the basket of provisions occupied the back of the vehicle; and that youth received numerous injunctions not to jog this, or spill that, or let the cork out of the other, from aunt Judith, who came to the gate in her morning headgear of curl-papers to assist at the departure.

‘Sit up straight, and don’t crease your scarf, Naomi,’ she cried. ‘There never was a better bit of silk; and you’ll have to be careful of that muslin frock, if you mean to wear it next Sunday. Two starched frocks in a week would be more extravagance than I could reconcile my conscience to, even if you could—and you don’t get any more starch out of me this side of Monday, remember.’

With this injunction in her ears, Naomi left home behind her; but earth was too fair this day for any one’s mind to be worried by the thought of a starched frock. What is there between the North and South Pole fairer than an English landscape—Devonshire lanes and commons, woods and vales, Devonshire’s coast and sea, in the vivid August sun-

light? Can any Alpine grandeur, can all the glory and colour of the tropics, surpass this tender English beauty—beauty that creeps into one's soul and makes one glad; beauty that melts the ice of frozen hearts, that warms age into the exuberance of youth, that bids the wanderer lay down his bundle of cares, his knapsack of perplexities, and rejoice because the sunshine is so kind and earth so fair?

Naomi was in the humour for rejoicing this morning, but her joy was very quiet. She sat by her father's side in silence, and watched the landscape dreamily, thinking of her lover. Her lover? Yes, for she loved him. Yes, for she believed that he loved her.

Joshua too was silent and had his own thoughts this August morning. Gray Dobbin was quiet to drive, or in other words required no driving whatever, but took his way steadily over familiar roads, and plodded cautiously down hills of appalling steepness, and clambered up the same hills cheerfully, as an animal that knew he had been foaled in a hilly country and was contented with his lot. So Joshua sat with the reins loose in his left hand, and

dreamed his dreams ; and the commons were golden with furze, and the reapers were busy in the tawny cornfields, and a covey of partridges went whirring upward every here and there from the shelter of some hedge, and the poppies gleamed scarlet amidst the wheat, and the bindweed's white bells hung on every hedge, and the traveller's joy shed its aromatic perfume on the air, and the orchards on hillside and in hollow were ruddy with ripening fruit, and all sweet things that blossom late in the summer were in perfection.

No sign of Herne the Hunter yet awhile, though they had travelled half their journey, and Dobbin had stopped to have his mouth washed out at the hamlet of Simondale, a handful of cottages and a battered old public-house at the feet of two steep hills—a village in a pit.

'He won't come to-day,' thought Naomi, with a sigh ; and the holiday seemed not quite so perfect as it might have been—not so perfect as it was last year, when there was no such person as Oswald Pen-treath in her thoughts, and the glory and beauty of the earth had no double meaning.

Over another common and up and down more hills, and then from a narrow road descending a wooded steep they see Rockmouth lying at their feet—not a tourists' resort in those days, but an obscure little fishing-village on a rocky shore.

There it lay—the lowly cluster of thatched cottages, the humble patches of garden, the wells, and pigsties, and beehives, and hayricks, and strawyards; the village forge; the church, standing aloof on a hill, looking down at the abodes of its congregation; the Squire's house—red-brick and spacious, set on a richly-timbered slope—a little way off, with its front to the sea; and, as the curve of the bay widened, rose the rocky wall of the tall cliff, precipitous, dangerous, yet not too steep for sheep to browse upon its rugged breast.

‘How lovely!’ cried Naomi, surveying that rocky coast, with its wild variety of crag and pinnacle. ‘Wouldn't you think they were castles, father, over there—keeps and watch-towers? I can fancy men in armour firing their arrows down into the valley, or keeping guard upon those battlements against enemies from the sea.’

‘How jolly nice it must be for smugglers on such a coast as this!’ remarked Jim. ‘Plenty of caves to hide their plunder in, and those rocks to climb when they want to survey their ground, and to hoist signals upon—tar-barrels and suchlike. Where shall we have our dinner, father?’

‘I sha’n’t have much time to waste upon dinner, Jim,’ replied Mr. Haggard indifferently. ‘You and Naomi had better take charge of the basket, and settle it all between you.’

‘O, come, father, you must have your share of the pasty. I saw aunt Judith making it—she happened to be in a particularly good temper, or she wouldn’t have let me—and I know it’s prime. Such juicy steak, and lots of potato! Won’t the gravy gush out when you put your knife into it, unless it’s turned to jelly! My eye, ain’t I hungry!’

‘Don’t be so vulgar, Jim,’ remonstrated Naomi, with a depressing conviction that such a youth as this would be no fitting brother-in-law for young Squire Pentreath. Since that serious conversation with her father she had thought much of social differences and distinctions, and had told herself

despondently that, good and great as her father might be, there was a wide gulf between a Methodist preacher's daughter and Oswald Pentreath. But then Love has a knack of spanning such gulfs, and the good old story of King Cophetua and the beggar- maiden is always being acted over again after some fashion or other.

'I'll tell you a tiptop place for dinner, father,' exclaimed Jim. 'You see that rock yonder—the tallest one, the shape of a castle—there's a grassy hollow just under it, facing the sea, quite safe, for the cliff isn't half so steep there as it is in other places; and the ferns grow there lovely, and purple mosses, and red stonecrop just like coral, and all sorts of things that Naomi's fond of. Will you come there with us, father—it isn't above a mile from the inn where Dobbin stops—and dig into the pasty before you begin your business calls?'

Mr. Haggard looked at his watch meditatively. He did not much affect these picnickings and carousings, but he was glad to oblige his children on such a day as this, which was a kind of annual holiday, a rare occasion on which he went out of his way a little

to give them pleasure. Dobbin had come at a good pace, so it was early yet, not much past noontide, and the days were still long.

‘Very well, my dears,’ he said; ‘I’ll come and have some dinner with you, and then I’ll leave you to amuse yourselves among the rocks while I go my rounds.’

Dobbin was safely installed in his stables at the Traveller’s Rest, a comfortable little inn just at the bottom of the hill, and then Jim shouldered the basket, and trudged sturdily on ahead, while Naomi and her father followed at a more sober pace.

The path they trod was a wild and romantic footway, a narrow ledge cut out of the cliff. Below them shelved the steep craggy slope, rich in the varied colours of wild flower and moss, with lonely sheep feeding here and there, or bounding chamois-like from peak to peak. Far away spread the summer sea, placid as an Italian lake, and as exquisite in hue.

‘Isn’t it lovely, father?’ cried Naomi. ‘I always feel grateful to God for having given us such a beautiful world when I come to Rockmouth.’

‘We ought to be grateful at all times and under all circumstances, Naomi, even if our lot had been cast at the bottom of a coal-mine.’

‘Yes, I suppose so,’ sighed the girl; ‘but gratitude comes easier to people who dwell among lovely scenes. It must be hard work to be grateful for life that is all misery.’

Joshua had no answer. These problems in man’s existence were not easily to be solved.

‘There is a better world, Naomi, where the balance is adjusted,’ he said after a pause.

‘I know, father. And if the unhappy people in wretched places *can* believe that, it must comfort them. But it must be difficult for people who have never known what it is to be happy on earth to believe in the blissfulness of heaven.’

They came to the castle rock, a spot where there was a break in the steep wall of cliffs, as if some mammoth battering-train had made a breach in the island’s battlements; and here a green cup-shaped valley opened in the craggy shore—a vale scattered with rocks and boulders, moss-grown and fern-embellished.

'How sweet!' cried Naomi.

'Isn't it prime?' inquired James, who had arrived some minutes in advance of his companions, and had already unpacked the basket, or 'maund,' as he called it. 'There's a pasty for you, and cheesecakes, and a big stone jar of cider, and a couple of tumblers, and plates, and knives and prongs, and all complete. Sit down, father—that's your place; and here's a mossy seat for Naomi, just as if it was made for us.'

Then came half an hour of real domestic harmony. Joshua and his children being hungry, ample justice was done to the pasty and cheesecakes, and much commendation bestowed upon aunt Judith as the provider of the feast. It seemed such a curious thing to eat a meal without that pragmatic presence—without fear of being called to order for the too free use of God's creatures, in the shape of beef-steak and piecrust. Even Mr. Haggard, though he would have been unwilling to own as much, enjoyed this dinner on the castle rock, with the green valley and the jasper sea spread out like a carpet at his feet, better than any meal he had ever eaten in

his respectable parlour, where there was no wider prospect than a glimpse of the First and Last, and a background of wooded hill, seen across the tops of the geraniums and double stocks that somewhat bounded one's view of the outer world. To-day these picnickers seemed to have a universe all to themselves.

'I feel just as if we had gone out somewhere in a ship and landed on an unknown island,' said Jim. 'I wonder if we shall meet any of the natives by and by, and if they will scalp us?'

'I think there is nothing in life so nice as a picnic,' exclaimed Naomi, 'except having you all to ourselves, father. That is better than the picnic.'

'I wish you would stay with us all the afternoon, father, and tell us stories about foreign countries,' said Jim.

'That would not be doing my errand at Rockmouth, James,' answered the minister, pulling out his big watch once more. 'It's nearly two o'clock, and we must start for home at six. I must leave you, my dears. I trust Naomi to you, James, remember. Be sure you lead her into no dangerous

places. You'd better not go any farther along the cliff, but take a stroll across the valley, and up the hill to those woods yonder. You'll find plenty of new ferns for your wilderness up there, I daresay, Naomi.'

'Don't be uneasy, father,' replied James confidently; 'I'll take care of her.'

Joshua departed, thoughtful of all that he had to do, of his duties temporal and spiritual—the prices at which he could afford to sell tea and sugar and other colonial produce; the bedridden old men and women to whom he must administer counsel and consolation.

It was just the sleepest, goldenest hour of the summer day. Naomi sat in her mossy hollow under the overhanging rock, with her head resting against the stone, and her eyes fixed dreamily on a silver-shining sail far away on the edge of the sea.

'I could watch the sea and sky for hours on such a day as this,' she said, too deliciously idle to look in the direction of the individual to whom she addressed the remark.

'And I could be content to watch beside you, or

to swim such a sea to come to you,' answered a voice—not Jim's—close at her side.

The suddenness and the closeness startled her. She turned white and then red.

'I'm afraid I frightened you,' said Oswald apologetically.

He had come up from the valley, his footfall noiseless on the soft mossy turf.

'You did startle me a little,' replied Naomi breathlessly, with a hot blush still staining her cheek.

How should a country girl, unschooled in pretences of any kind, know how to hide her emotion?

'But you must have known that I should come,' said Oswald, looking up at Jim, who had climbed a loftier peak, and was taking a survey of earth and ocean from about the most unsafe footing he could find for himself.

'How could I know? I thought perhaps that you—' faltered Naomi, plucking little tufts of coral-tinted sea-moss from the crag at her side.

'Did you think that I could endure Combhaven for a day without you, having the power to follow

you? I knew all about your picnic, but not when it was to be; and I made up my mind to join you. I should have been here earlier, only my father took it into his head to want me this morning; and I was closeted in his study, reading over leases to him, for a couple of hours. It was twelve o'clock when I went out for my ride. I called at the shop as I passed, and the man told me you had come here with your father; so I let Herne have his head and bring me over to Rockmouth as fast as he liked. I've left him at the Traveller's Rest.'

'That's where Dobbin stays,' said Naomi.

'Yes, I saw him munching hay in a dark old stable. And how long are you going to stay here, Naomi?'

'O, ever so long! Jim and I are free till six o'clock, and we are going fern-hunting.'

'Never mind the ferns to-day. Let me take you for a ramble along the beach.'

'Is it safe? Father told us not to go into any dangerous places.'

'It is quite safe. Do you think I would lead you into danger? I know every bit of this coast.'

We'll hunt sea-anemones instead of ferns; they are much more interesting.'

'Sea-anemones!' cried Naomi, opening her eyes.

She had some acquaintance with the tribe, but did not know them by name.

'Yes; those lovely pink and white and green and blue things, which uncurl their petals and expand, and close again like living blossoms—the roses and lilies in old Neptune's garden; animal flowers, the naturalists call them. Let me introduce you to them. We'll go down to the beach. You're not afraid to trust yourself to my care, are you, Naomi?'

The noble dark eyes met his with a look that was all truth and trustfulness. Faith, hope, and charity were the three virtues that looked out of Naomi's eyes—infinite faith in the goodness of others, infinite pity for the sorrows of others, infinite hope in all things pure and fair on earth and in heaven.

Naomi looked down at the beach. There were shining patches of wet yellow sand here and there,

and low rocks covered with many-coloured seaweed —slippery perilous rocks, no doubt, but very beautiful in their brilliant colouring under that summer sky. It would be nice to explore that beach, Naomi thought; but at this moment her eye caught the basket, which Jim had deposited in a sly cleft of the rocks.

‘ You have had no luncheon, perhaps,’ she said. ‘ Wouldn’t you like to try aunt Judith’s pasty before we go to look for those sea-flowers?’

‘ Aunt Judith’s pasty would be most *apropos*.’

‘ I am so glad!’ cried Naomi, delighted to minister to his wants.

She opened the basket and brought out the remains of the pasty, and spread a napkin on a ledge of the crag, and made things quite comfortable, in picnicking fashion. There was some cider left in the stone jar. She looked beyond measure happy as she sat by Oswald’s side while he ate, and poured out the cider for him in a little old-fashioned tumbler with a foot. He enjoyed this rustic meal vastly, but would not waste much time upon eating.

‘ Come,’ he said, folding the napkin and putting

it back into the basket, 'let us go after the anemones.'

'May Jim come with us?' asked Naomi.

'Of course he may.'

On looking round over land and sea, however, there was no James to be seen. Naomi called, but there was no answer.

'What a tiresome boy! And father was so anxious that he should not go into any dangerous places.'

'He's safe, depend upon it: boys always are. Nothing serious ever happens to a boy, no more than it does to a cat. Boys tumble from places and tear their clothes, but nothing ever hurts them.'

'That's rather true about Jim,' replied Naomi. 'He's always frightening us somehow or other; but he never comes to any harm.'

'Of course not. I daresay we shall find him on the beach.'

The beach seemed as likely as any other place for finding him; so Naomi assented, and they went down the narrow path—the slenderest footway—and Naomi stepped lightly from crag to crag with her

hand in Oswald's. It was like going to heaven the reverse way. Her soul fluttered and soared, and rose higher and higher, as her mortal frame descended the cliff.

How lovely it was on the beach—those smooth shining sands, those treacherous rocks, slippery and cruel and deceitful as the heart of man! How lovely sea and sky, and the fertile earth sloping upwards from the sands! How lovely to live in such a world, and to feel as Naomi felt, her hand still locked in Oswald's—perhaps unawares—as they walked slowly along the sands, pretending to look for sea-anemones in all those still waterpools in the hollows of the rocks—darkly-shining water, like black diamonds!

'Naomi,' said Oswald in a low voice, 'how sweet it is to be alone with you!'

Naomi crimsoned at the speech, commonplace as it was.

'We are often alone—in the wilderness,' she said shyly. 'There's one, striped purple and white. How pretty!' pointing to a creature in a pool.

‘I doat upon the wilderness,’ replied Oswald. ‘But we are not often alone there; Jim is generally good enough to keep us company. He is a dear fellow; but I would rather have you all to myself like this. Look round, Naomi; except for yonder white sail we might be in some unknown island of the Southern Sea. Are you glad that I found you to-day, Naomi?’

She looked at him thoughtfully, gravely, with those truthful eyes, and then answered deliberately,

‘Yes.’

‘The day is sweeter to you because we spend it together?’

‘Yes. You are the only friend I have in Comb-haven—the only friend who seems to understand all I think and feel and hope. I have other friends, of course—people I like; only they seem far off compared with you.’

‘Does that mean love, Naomi?’

‘I do not know,’ she answered, with drooping eyelids.

‘Tell me that it does, Naomi, and make me the happiest of men. I have waited for an hour like

this—solitude calm as this—to tell you all I feel, to show you my heart. It has been yours for a long while, dear. You have made my life happy; you have given me hopes and dreams I never had before. You reprove me sometimes for my willingness to live what you call a purposeless life at Combhaven. My darling, I have no purpose in life but to live happily with you; no ambition except to win you for my wife.'

'A very poor ambition,' she answered, with a grave sweet smile, 'and perhaps a foolish one. I will not say that I am surprised, Oswald,' lifting her eyes shyly to his earnest face,—'I will not say that I did not think you—cared for me. I have thought it lately, and thought of it very seriously; but my mind is not clear. I am not sure that it is for your welfare or mine that I should let you speak to me of love; that I should ever be any nearer to you than I am now, as your faithful and true friend.'

'My gentle sermoniser,' exclaimed Oswald, contemplating her with admiring eyes, and stealing his arm round her waist, 'and why these doubts?'

‘ We are not of the same rank in life ; we are very far apart. What would be said in Combhaven if you should marry a grocer’s daughter ?’

‘ Why, I suppose the verdict of the majority would be that I had married the prettiest girl in the place,’ he answered lightly.

‘ O Oswald, please be serious. I know that people would say hard and bitter things. They would say you had lowered yourself by such a marriage ; that father had set a trap for you. And you yourself would be sorry after a little while. How would you like to have aunt Judith for your aunt, and to know that your father-in-law was standing behind a counter ?’

‘ I will put up with the counter and aunt Judith for your sake.’

‘ Why should you make such a sacrifice when you might marry a lady ?’

‘ I have seen no better lady than you, Naomi, and I will have no other lady for my wife. I respect your father as much as if he were a bishop, and shall never blush for my alliance with him. I suppose I am a republican at heart ; for I have no

idea that the fact of a man keeping a shop makes him my inferior. There is no huckster living that will haggle longer or make a closer bargain than my father when he has a farm to let. Is he less a trader because his stock-in-trade is the soil? He is so much the less to be honoured for its possession that it came to him from his father, instead of being the fruit of his own industry.'

'That is the way a great many people talk, and very few people think,' answered Naomi thoughtfully.

'I am one who think as I speak. Come, love, let us not argue social questions. I want an answer to a question that touches us nearer. I love you with all my heart, Naomi; I want you for my wife; I recognise no social difference between us. I shall be as proud to win you as if you were the daughter of a duke. I shall feel as triumphant on our wedding-day as if you were a princess of the land, and our marriage set all the church-bells in this island ringing. Answer me, dearest. I give you true and ardent love; have you nothing to give me in return?'

'I will not answer lightly,' said Naomi, grave to sadness. 'Think how awful a question you wish me to answer. All our lives to come depend upon our wisdom in this matter. We must not decide thoughtlessly, either you or I. And I am afraid you are thoughtless in most things, Oswald,' she added, looking up at his smiling face.

'I do not think love and thought are very close allies, Naomi. I love you too well to analyse my feelings or argue about my love; and I think if you loved me ever so little you would be less disposed to make difficulties.'

'Do you feel that you will love me all your life, Oswald; that this fancy of yours will not wear out; that, if I were to be your wife, the day would never come when you would regret your choice, when you would feel that you might have chosen more wisely?'

'That day would never come, Naomi; my heart answers for that. Come, love, have we not seen enough of each other to be very sure of our own feelings? I have known you a year, dearest. It is no sudden fancy which I miscall love. My affec-

tion for you began as friendship, grave and sweet and tranquil, and slowly ripened into love. Have I not the right to answer boldly for such a love as this? We have bared our hearts to each other, we have no secrets from each other, we have knelt side by side and prayed together, we have been as familiar as if we were of the same household. Can you fear change or decay in a love that has so ripened? Indeed, my dearest, there is no need for fear.'

Naomi had made up her mind to be very serious—very firm—whenever this question came to be argued; to yield only on conviction, and to be very slow to be convinced. But she felt her reasoning powers beginning to fail her. Sincerity was written on Oswald's brow, truth shone in his eyes, and she loved him—loved him with all the trustfulness and hopefulness of first love. How should she argue in such a case?

'Answer me, Naomi; tell me that I have not fooled myself with baseless hopes—that you give me love for love?'

'I will answer nothing for myself,' she replied,

releasing herself from his arm ; ' my father shall decide for us. He shall choose.'

' That's a cold answer to give a lover,' said Oswald, offended.

' It is for life,' she answered. ' I will not answer lightly ; I will not trust myself to decide.'

' If you loved me, Naomi, you would not let any one else decide my fate.'

' If you think that I do not love you put me out of your thoughts,' she answered, with a little touch of dignity. She was thinking more of his future happiness than her own. Would it not be ineffable bliss to be his—to belong to him as his servant, his bond slave—how much more as his equal companion and helpmeet !

' You are cold-hearted and cruel.'

' No, Oswald, I am trying to be wise. I think my father will answer as you wish, but he will not answer rashly. If he did not think it for your well-fare that we should be married, he would say no, although he might think it was for my happiness.'

' It is hard to have to deal with such good

people. Any other girl than you would have answered differently.'

'How would she have answered?' asked Naomi.

'Silently, perhaps. She would have looked up in my face, and our lips would have met and sealed the bond between us. Our first kiss would have meant for ever and ever. She would not have preached me a sermon about social differences and my future welfare,' said Oswald, angered by his sweetheart's measured replies.

He had made up his mind that he had but to speak the word, and she would put her hand in his, and accept her fate as submissively as Esther received the crown, or Ruth gave herself to Boaz. He was quite willing to sacrifice all social distinctions and descend to the level of Joshua Haggard's family, but he expected that sacrifice to be regarded in some wise as a favour.

They walked on slowly and in silence for a little while, and there was no more talk of the sea-anemones. Naomi looked at the shining pools among the rocks with eyes that saw not; Oswald gazed steadily seaward.

He got the better of his angry feelings after a little while, and was ashamed of his ill-temper.

‘Forgive me, Naomi, for my ungraciousness,’ he said. ‘I know that you are one of the noblest of women ; but there is a leaven of selfishness in man that makes him impatient of high principles when they oppose the tide of his passion. You are good and unselfish and true, and strong as a rock. You are not like Byron’s women, Naomi. They are love incarnate ; ready to sacrifice themselves or their lover at the shrine of love. They look neither backward nor forward ; with them the present is infinite and eternal, and the present is love. They are gloriously happy for a little while ; then come despair and ruin, and they die untimely, broken-hearted. They are not made

“Through years or moons the inner weight to bear,
Which colder hearts endure till they are laid
By age in earth.”

‘Do you want me to be like that?’ asked Naomi.
‘It seems a hard destiny.’

‘No, Naomi ; but I wish you had less thoughtfulness and more feeling.’

'You have not sounded the depths of my heart,' she answered, with her grave smile.

'No, because you keep its treasures too closely guarded. Come, dearest, only tell me that you love me, and I will be satisfied.'

'And you will abide by my father's decision?'

'Yes, for I cannot believe he would be so cruel as to part us.'

'Then I will tell you the truth. I love you with all my heart. You have changed all things in my life. I used to have great thoughts of doing some good work, far away, among heathen children in strange benighted lands. They are all gone now. I have no thought—except love and duty to my father—that does not belong to you.'

'Bless you, Naomi, for that sweet confession. I fear nothing now. Your father would have parted us long ago if he had meant to part us ever. I am content to abide his decision; but I wanted the assurance of love from your own dear lips.'

Cheered by this assurance Oswald was very happy for the rest of that summer afternoon, and the tranquil radiance in Naomi's eyes told of an equal,

and perhaps a deeper, joy. They wandered on that bright shore, and made-believe to be interested in the study of natural history; but their talk drifted away from jelly-fish and sea-weeds and rosy-shining shells, to vague speculations about their own future—Oswald talking of what he would do for Combhaven by and by when the Squire should sleep with his forefathers, and how his brother Arnold would come back and live with them, and how Naomi should build a new chapel for her father and a school for her own little flock, and the grocery business should be handed over to Jim and aunt Judith, and Joshua should have more leisure for his duties as preacher and teacher.

‘And you will never be ashamed of your Methodist wife and your Methodist father-in-law, Oswald?’ asked Naomi anxiously.

‘Never, dearest. Shall I scorn the light because it shines from a lamp of a different fashion from that the State prescribes? Who knows that I shall not turn Methodist myself some day? I have learned more of the Gospel in your father’s parlour than I ever learned before I came among you, and have

been more moved by his sermons than by the sleepy doctrinal treatises our good vicar gives us—a weak dilution of Tillotson or Blair.’

The westering sun warned them that it was time to look for James, and to think of getting back to the Traveller’s Rest, where they were to meet Joshua after his labours. Oswald looked at a large white-faced watch that had belonged to his mother, and was not the most reliable of timekeepers. It was a quarter to five; so they walked slowly back to the point at which they had descended, and climbed the devious way to the castle rock, where they had the satisfaction of finding James seated at the base of the crag, with the basket between his knees, devouring the remains of the pasty.

‘Where have you been hiding yourself all the afternoon, Jim?’ asked Naomi.

‘Ah, I daresay; a deal you’ve looked for me. Where have *you* been all the afternoon? down on the beach making a regular panorama of yourselves. You didn’t know anybody was looking, did you? You didn’t know I was on the top of the cliff all the time enjoying the view. Never mind, Naomi, I forgive you.’

'We've had a very happy afternoon, Jim, and Naomi has promised to be my wife—with her father's consent.'

Jim clapped his hands, and performed a kind of war-dance on the little bit of sunburnt sward on the edge of the cliff.

'I'm so glad,' he said. 'Of course I saw what was coming—at least I saw that you and Naomi were getting very fond of each other, and I thought you were the right sort, and wouldn't be ashamed to marry a grocer's daughter if you loved her dearly—like Caroline in the song, who married the sailor bold.'

And Jim began, with strong Devonian twang, to sing the opening verse of a popular ballad—

'*Caroline* was a nobleman's daughter.'

Oswald was too deep in love just now to be struck by the idea that this would be rather an inconvenient brother-in-law; and perhaps Jim was not much more vulgar than boyhood is in general.

They went back to the village of Rockmouth through the valley, instead of taking the narrow path on the cliff, and there was some loitering by

the way to dig spleenwort from the interstices of a low stone wall. It was a pleasant sauntering walk ; but they contrived to reach the Traveller's Rest just as the clock struck six. Dobbin was harnessed, and standing patiently before the door ; Joshua Haggard sat in the porch talking to a little group of men.

He showed some surprise at seeing Oswald with his children, but greeted him with hearty friendliness. Jim stowed away the empty basket, Naomi took her seat in the chaise-cart without loss of time, Herne the Hunter was brought out of his stable, and the little party started on the return journey, Herne curveting beside the near wheel of the cart, while his master talked to Naomi and her father.

What a delightful homeward drive that was, by hill and dale, across those wide rippling commons, where the yellow gorse looked pale in the twilight ; past those deep and silent valleys, where a lonely homestead here and there made the solitude seem more intense ; through hamlets that had a sleepy look already, as if half their little world had gone to bed ! And by and by the full round harvest moon

rose above the distant sea, and steeped all this fair world in glory.

Something in that moonlight splendour moved Oswald—as Nature's deepest beauties are apt to move hearts that love—and he leant over to Naomi and clasped her hand; and in that hand-clasp it seemed to both as if they locked their lives for ever.

Oswald had an interview with Joshua Haggard next day, and pleaded his cause with warmth and generous feeling, to which Naomi's father responded with perfect frankness.

'I am not too proud to confess that I am proud of your choice,' he said. 'I know it is out of the beaten track for the son of a landowner—a man of old family—to marry a tradesman's daughter. If I were a wholesale trader in the city of London, and had made a million of money, it would be a different thing. I know that hard things will be said of such a marriage, and that there are people who will slight your wife if you are not wise enough to keep her out of their way. I know all this, Mr. Pentreath; and yet, knowing also that here are two

fresh unsullied young hearts cleaving to each other naturally like twin hazel-nuts in the same shell, I cannot bring myself to study the world's opinion, and to withhold my consent to your marriage with my daughter.'

'I knew you would not,' cried Oswald impetuously.

'All I ask—and that I insist upon—is that this marriage shall not be entered upon rashly; that you shall have ample time to know your own mind, to weigh the consequences of such an act, to make sure against the possibility of repentance. You are both young—Naomi only on the threshold of womanhood. Give me your promise that you will think no more of marriage for the next two years; that in all your communion with my daughter you will keep within the bounds of a sober friendship; that there shall be no foolish love-talk between you. And if at the end of those two years your heart still inclines to her, if you still believe that it will be for the happiness of both that you should marry, I will freely give my blessing on your union, and feel that I have wronged no man.'

‘Those are somewhat hard conditions, Mr. Haggard,’ said Oswald, reduced from rapture to disappointment. ‘You will surely allow me to be considered Naomi’s affianced husband during these two years of probation?’

‘Not so, Mr. Pentreath. You will be welcome here as the friend of the household; but I will sanction no engagement between you and my daughter till the end of the time I have named. I ask only for your promise that you will be Naomi’s friend, and not her lover. I think I can trust you: I know that I can trust my daughter.’

‘I would submit to the hardest conditions rather than be parted from Naomi,’ replied Oswald, after a pause; ‘and I know that she will obey you, however hard your decree. It must be so, then, I suppose, Mr. Haggard. I will say no word to Naomi that a household friend might not say; I will forbear from all talk of our future; I will give her reverence and honour, and keep all sweeter thoughts and hopes locked in my heart.’

‘There is my hand upon it, Oswald,’ said Joshua, calling the Squire’s son by his Christian name for

the first time. 'You shall be like a son of the house henceforward. And now let me ask you a question. Has your father any idea of your attachment to Naomi?'

'He knows that I have spent many an evening in your house—I have never kept that a secret from him—and I think, from certain hints and innuendoes of his, that he has suspected the nature of the attraction that has drawn me here so often. I do not believe that he would entertain any strong objection to my marriage with Naomi, and if he did object, I should refuse to submit to his authority in this matter. He has not been so tender a father that I should sacrifice my inclination to his whims.'

'He *is* your father,' said Joshua, 'and you are bound to obey him.'

'Yes, in all right things. But I do not think that he will oppose any hindrance to my free choice of a wife, so long as I choose one who has been carefully brought up, and who will not squander the money he has scraped together.'

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SQUIRE MAKES A BARGAIN.

ANOTHER year had gone in gentle tranquillity—a year marked by no shadow of trouble, doubt, or dissension in Joshua Haggard's household. Oswald had been true to his promise, and had held religiously to his prescribed position as a friend of the family. The simple uneventful life had glided on in its allotted course: the tea-drinkings in the parlour; aunt Judith's lectures on the economics and duties of existence; dawdling evenings in the wilderness, in which nothing progressed but the gray-worsted stocking on Naomi's shining needles, which, being only taken off to give place to another stocking of exactly the same shape and colour, seemed to Oswald a fair type of eternity; the Scripture-reading and exhortation at eventide; the homely suppers and friendly partings with Naomi and her father at the little wooden gate,—placid monotonous joys, which

had not yet begun to pall upon Oswald Pentreath. If there had been any hollowness in Joshua's life, any shams to be discovered in his household, familiarity would have vulgarised this quiet home circle; but all here was good and true. Even aunt Judith, though far from pleasant, was at this stage of her existence transparent as the daylight. There were no skeletons in cupboards for the stranger to stumble upon unawares, no domestic dustholes to reveal themselves to the disgusted explorer.

Very quiet and peaceful and passionless was this courtship which was no courtship, and yet meant as much to the two actors in the little comedy as if they had been lovers of the most romantic type, and had never opened their mouths save to pour forth a torrent of sentimentality. No cloistered nun was ever truer to her vow than Naomi to the promise she had made her father that there should be no talk of love or marriage between her and Oswald during this time of probation; and Oswald, although given to occasional little gusts of rebellion, was fain to submit and to accept his position with a good grace.

'I am like a shopboy in your father's employ-

ment,' he said. 'If I behave pretty well during my apprenticeship, and keep my fingers off the sugar and figs, and refrain from extracting odd sixpences out of the till, I am to be taken as a partner when I am out of my time. I am on trial: isn't that it, Naomi?'

'It is your future happiness that is on trial, Oswald. If you can be constant to friendship you will be constant to—'

'Hush!' cried the young man, putting his hand upon her lips. 'The forbidden word was nearly out.'

Naomi blushed and hastened the flight of her knitting-needles, whilst Oswald laughed heartily at his small joke.

They were innocently happy together in these fair summer days, like children in ignorance of all the world outside the narrow circle of their individual lives, with not one thought or desire hidden from each other, and finding it as natural to be together, to think together, to hope together, and to dream together, as if they had been a new Ferdinand and Miranda, and this quiet nook, Combhaven, an enchanted island.

With Jim for their companion they wandered in the Squire's wood and park, and Herne had easy dreamy days in his loose-box, where he stood with his head hanging down as if he had done with the world and had not strength left in him for another mile; while Oswald taught Naomi how to use her pencil in copying lopsided old elms with yawning chasms in their trunks, or a little bit of rugged bank clothed with ferns and bright with foxgloves. Her intense love of nature made art easy to her.

It is not to be supposed that the life of Mr. Haggard's daughter was given over altogether to a blissful idleness such as this—to dreamy afternoons in the wood, to the cultivation of Nature's wildlings in her wilderness, and to primitive efforts with a lead pencil. She was up at five on these summer mornings, and helped Sally in the performance of her house-cleaning till breakfast-time. It was Naomi who arranged the parlours and polished the old mahogany tables and bureaus, and brightened all the brasswork, and kept every bit of old Chelsea or Battersea ware free from dust and stain. That tall straight figure of hers was none the worse for

assiduous table-rubbing, which widened her chest and gave lissomness to her limbs; and her clear pale complexion was all the better for early hours and an active life. The flower-pots were in Naomi's care, and a withered leaf on fuchsia or geranium—fuchsias were new in those days and esteemed highly by floriculturists—would have been a kind of disgrace. She starched and ironed all the muslin curtains, and aunt Judith's idea of gentility demanded a great deal of decorative drapery in starched muslin.

The house-linen was also in Naomi's charge, and many a modern housekeeper who gives thirty or forty guineas for a dinner-dress might blush on comparing her linen-closet with that roomy lavender-scented repository at the head of the staircase where Naomi kept her glistening tablecloths and Irish-linen sheets and pillow-cases, all neatly marked by her own hands and laid in orderly piles along the broad oak shelves. Naomi had the care of her father's and brother's wardrobes, and kept everything in neat repair, taking as much pains with a difficult job of darning as a young lady of the present day would devote to an

elaborate achievement in *point Turque* or *point de Venise*. Naomi made her own dresses, which were not uselessly numerous, and occasionally confectioned some decorative article for aunt Judith, who required to be propitiated with an industrious effort of that kind now and then.

It will be seen, therefore, that when Mr. Haggard's daughter enjoyed the sweets of Arcadian leisure she had fairly earned the privilege of idleness. No unhemmed duster cried out against her, no buttonless shirt lurking in drawer or wardrobe bore witness to her neglect. Life smiled at her with its serenest smile, and no accusing twinge of conscience reminded her of a forgotten duty.

Whether the Squire had known of his son's attachment to the dissenter's daughter from the time when Oswald's visits to the Haggards became frequent, or whether the fact revealed itself to him suddenly this summer through the gossip of Combhaven, would be difficult to decide. The Squire was a gentleman who could be as blind as a mole when it pleased him, or as sharp-sighted as a ferret if sharp-sightedness suited his purpose. On this

occasion he played the mole and pretended to know nothing, until one midsummer day, when he pounced upon his son at dinner-time with a sudden charge.

‘So, sir, you have been deceiving me,’ he exclaimed; ‘you have taken advantage of the liberty I give you to form low acquaintance.’

‘What do you mean by low acquaintance?’ asked Oswald, turning pale. ‘I associate with none who can be called by that name.’

‘What, sir! are you not hail-fellow-well-met with that grocer Haggard?’

‘I thought you professed republican sentiments, sir, and despised the petty differences of social rank.’

‘So I do, when a duke undersells me by letting his land at so low a rate that mine will hardly bring me three per cent; but I don’t want my son and heir to keep company with counter-jumpers. Trade is an honourable calling, I’m republican enough to admit that; but this friend of yours is a Jack-of-all-trades, and deals in fire and brimstone on Sundays. I might forgive him for being a grocer, but I can’t forgive him for being a canting hypocritical knave.’

‘Why should you call him that? You don’t

know him; and you, who have no religion at all, cannot be prejudiced against him because he is a dissenter.'

'I call him canter and hypocrite because he trades on his piety, and sells his tea and sugar and candles faster than any other tradesman on the strength of his Sunday ranting.'

Oswald kept his temper with an effort. Abuse of Joshua Haggard was more than a man who loved Naomi could meekly bear.

'I happen to know Mr. Haggard thoroughly,' he said, 'and I know that he is honest as a trader and earnest as a preacher—that piety with him is no sham put on to serve a purpose—that in the old days, when persecution was the reward of faith, he would have testified to his belief at the stake. Yes, sir, this homely village shopkeeper is of the stuff that martyrs are made of.'

'I wish there were any probability of the wear and tear of this stuff being roughly tested,' retorted the Squire. 'These dissenters are very fond of howling about fire and brimstone in a remote and shadowy future. I should like to see them brought

face to face with a pile of blazing fagots in the present. However, this is wide of the purpose, young gentleman. I want to know what you mean by courting this Methodist's daughter.'

'What courtship generally means, sir—the prelude to marriage.'

'What, you, Oswald Pentreath, seriously intend to marry a grocer's daughter?'

'Certainly, my dear father, if she will have me. I think you should be flattered that your son shows himself so apt a disciple of your gospel of liberty.'

The Squire, who had lived through that all-uprooting whirlwind in history, the French Revolution, had often preached second-hand Marat and Danton to his son, to say nothing of second-hand Wilkes. But he was not prepared to have his opinions cast back in his teeth after this practical fashion.

'Then you mean to marry this girl?' he said.

'I do, sir. I shall be sorry if my marriage offends you, but as it is a matter which involves the happiness of my life you must not be angry if I choose for myself.'

‘A pretty choice for a gentleman’s son!’ exclaimed the Squire.

‘Supposing it were a bad choice, which I deny, what opportunities have I had for making a better? You have chosen to live your own life—you have shut yourself up in this house and isolated yourself from your fellow-men. You have kept me so complete a pauper, that I could not venture to make a friend in my own station lest I should be put to open shame some day on account of my empty pockets. I have accepted the life patiently enough. I have assumed a pride that I never felt, to save myself from humiliation. I have fenced myself round with a dogged reserve, to escape the degradation of being patronised by men who are my inferiors in all but purse.’

‘How much money can this parson of yours give his daughter?’ asked the Squire, suddenly changing his note.

‘That is a question I have never thought of asking.’

‘Humph!’ muttered the aggravated father. ‘You ought to have been a prince in a fairy tale. You’ve

about as much sense as that young man who picked up the glass slipper, and offered to marry the first woman who could get her foot into it. Now hark ye, sir, if Joshua Haggard can give his daughter five thousand pounds on her wedding-day—no settlements or rubbish of that sort, mind you—you can marry her without let or hindrance from me, and you can bring her home here. One young woman won't make much difference in the housekeeping, I suppose, for the first year or so.'

'I don't know about the five thousand pounds,' replied Oswald, 'but I thank you for the friendliness of your offer. I believe Mr. Haggard has saved money; but I should not like him to think I had any expectation of gain in proposing for his daughter.'

He told his father of his promise to Joshua, and under what conditions he was received in the minister's household.

'I have another year to serve before my apprenticeship is finished,' he said. 'I shall give you proper notice of my marriage, you may be assured.'

'That's dutiful; but be sure you don't marry

without a dowry. A few thousand pounds spent on improvements as the leases run out would raise our rents five-and-twenty per cent. As far as my own inclination goes, I'd as leave you married the grocer's daughter as the finest lady in the land, or leaver. I want no fine lady here to waste and squander, to find fault with the old-fashioned furniture, and quarrel with the old servants, and spend a fortune on new-fangled flowers with Latin names, as some do.'

Oswald was deeply grateful for thus much favour; and father and son spent the rest of the evening in the friendliest manner, the old Squire prosing about his estate, the rents he got as against the rents he ought to get, leases that were nearly run out, and leases that had a long time to run; but not by one word did he hint at money saved and invested.

'I sometimes wonder what becomes of your rental, father,' said Oswald. 'We seem to spend so little, and yet you never have any money.'

'Ah,' groaned the Squire, 'I was a fool in my time; I've had to pay for my folly. And you don't suppose that a house like this is kept up for nothing

—servants to pay, two horses in the stable ; and we all eat and drink, remember.'

'I should have thought four hundred a year would pay for everything.'

'Should you ?' cried the Squire ironically. 'You know no more of figures than a baby. Wait till I'm under the sod, and see how far four hundred a year will go in a barrack of a house like this.'

'But the empty rooms don't eat and drink, father, if we do.'

'I can't argue with a fool,' cried the Squire testily.

Oswald was very glad to have got over the revelation of his engagement to Naomi so easily. That condition about a dowry was something of a stumbling-block ; but he felt assured that Joshua did not mean his daughter to be portionless, and there was plenty of time for all business-like discussion. He felt happier in his wooing after that talk with his father—more at ease with Naomi, better satisfied with himself.

The Squire was a practical man, and having made up his mind upon a subject, was not slow in

putting his ideas into action. Three days after having come to an understanding with his son, the old man presented himself at Joshua Haggard's front-door in the drowsy afternoon. Sally, the maid-of-all-work, started back as if she had seen a vision on opening the door to that formidable visitor. She had just sense enough to usher Mr. Pentreath into the best parlour, and just strength enough to totter to the opposite room, where Naomi sat at her plain sewing. There was a drizzling rain falling from the dull gray sky, and no possibility of Arcadian rambles on this particular afternoon. Jim was in the shop, being inducted into the mysteries of stock-taking.

'It's the Squire,' gasped Sally, 'and he wants to see your father.'

Naomi grew pale at the announcement. Oswald had told her nothing about that talk with his father, the Squire's condition about the dowry being a hindrance to any such confidence. Naomi thought that the Squire had come to remonstrate. This happy year that was nearly ended was to be the beginning and end of her delight. Some crushing

stroke was about to fall, annihilating love and happiness. No one had a good word for the Squire, and she could only think of him as a tyrant and an enemy.

She opened the door of communication with the shop.

‘You are wanted, father. Mr. Pentreath has called to see you,’ she said faintly.

‘Tell him I shall come in to tea.’

‘It’s not Oswald, father; it’s old Mr. Pentreath.’

‘What, the Squire! then I must come at once. You’d better do no more till I come back, Jim; you’ll only get things in a muddle.’

And Jim, nothing loth to be released from his labours, shut the big account-book with a slam, jumped off his high stool, and came whistling out of the counting-house, a little railed-in pen at the end of the shop.

‘I’ll wash my hands and come to the Squire directly, Naomi,’ said Joshua; and then, seeing the girl’s pale face, he stopped to pat her gently on the shoulder. ‘Don’t be frightened, my dear; the

Squire can do us no harm. We have been honest and straightforward throughout.'

'I feel as if he had come to end my dream, father.'

'Life is something more than a dream, Naomi; and a good woman's happiness is not to be blown away by the breath of a bad man.'

He went out to the back premises to wash his hands; and then, in no wise discomposed by his visitor's importance, made his appearance in the parlour, where the Squire was peering at the fly-leaf of the family Bible, on which Joshua's marriage and the birth of his two children were recorded. Mr. Pentreath, who knew the names and histories of his neighbours for forty miles round Combhaven, was pleased to see that Naomi's mother had been a Penrose—a name which implied the probability of a dowry, the Penroses being wealthy farmers on the other side of Rockmouth.

He greeted the minister with unusual affability.

'I hope I didn't disturb you in your business occupations, Mr. Haggard,' he began graciously. 'I have wished to call upon you for ever so long; but

I am a busy man myself, as I daresay you know—my own steward and bailiff; pay all my accounts with my own hands, and see to every detail—the only way to make a moderate estate thrive. Pray be seated, my dear sir; I want a friendly talk with you,' concluded the Squire, ensconcing himself in the large chintz-covered arm-chair, chintz daintily clean and smelling of lavender.

Joshua drew out one of the ponderous mahogany chairs from the wall, and seated himself opposite his guest.

'Now I suppose, Mr. Haggard, though you and I have never met on friendly terms before, we know as much about each other as if we had been living under the same roof for the last ten years. Nobody has any secrets in a place like Combhaven. You know that I was what is called wild in my youth; that I spent a good deal of money—very wild that—and mortgaged my estate in order to drink and gamble with a pack of ruffians whom I thought wits and fine gentlemen then, and whom I regard with ineffable contempt now. The only thing that has remained to me from those days is a certain liberality

of opinion, which places me above the level of these country bumpkins you and I have the misfortune to live amongst.'

'I count it no misfortune to live where I do, Mr. Pentreath. I have an honest liking for most of my neighbours, a warm affection for some of them.'

'Ah, you are Christian-like by profession,' sneered the Squire. 'I suppose the animal creation in Combhaven as good as any other cattle of the same breed; but when one has lived with men who think for themselves, and interchange ideas of some sort—no matter how spurious or how shallow—when they talk, these sons of the soil are but poor company. However, as I was saying, my friends of 'ninety-five robbed me of my money, and gave me nothing but their freedom of thought in exchange. The school I graduated in held that a shopkeeper was as good as a landowner any day.'

'The school I belong to holds that all men are equal in the presence of their Creator,' replied Joshua quietly; 'but we are not the less ready to respect distinctions of class upon earth, and to honour our superiors.'

‘Yet you allowed my son to come courting your daughter.’

‘Under such restrictions as would enable him and me to be very sure that he was in earnest before I suffered him to marry her.’

‘Upon my word, sir, you carry things with a high hand. And it never occurred to you to consult my feelings in respect to this alliance?’

‘I considered your son old enough to make his own election.’

‘Perhaps you did not know that I could disinherit him if he offended me?’

‘Yes, Mr. Pentreath. I knew your estate to be unentailed, and your power to dispose of your property unlimited; but as I value your son for what he is himself, rather than for any possibility of inheritance, this consideration had no influence upon me.’

‘You mean to tell me that you would marry your daughter to a penniless gentleman?’

‘I mean to tell you that I would marry her to an honest man who honestly loved her, and trust to Providence for finding him an occupation and a livelihood.’

‘You would make him turn preacher, perhaps?’

‘Not unless he had the gift and vocation for such a calling. I would rather tie a linen apron round his waist and teach him to sell tea and sugar.’

‘A Pentreath turned village grocer!’ cried the Squire; ‘that would be pushing freedom of opinion to its utmost. Well, Mr. Haggard, I admire your independence, and I am not going to interfere with my son’s courtship of your daughter. He shall marry her if he likes and you like, and he shall have Pentreath Grange and all that belongs thereto in due time. There may be some of my neighbours who will call me a fool for this indulgence of a young man’s fancy; but as my neighbours and I have never been on very friendly terms, I can afford to let them say hard things of me behind my back. Oswald may marry that handsome daughter of yours and bring her home to the Grange as soon as he pleases. And now, Mr. Haggard, having settled the main question we can proceed to details. How much money—you’re a warm man, I know, my good friend—how much, now, do you mean to give this only daughter?’

‘That is a question I have never asked myself.’

‘Perhaps not; but it is a question you must have expected somebody else to ask you sooner or later. My son has no more idea of life’s realities than a bread-and-butter miss at boarding-school. He would never ask you such a question. It’s my duty as a man of the world to think for him in this matter. You must have saved a good bit of money, Mr. Haggard. Your father had the business before you; and while you were roaming about the hills preaching to the miners and suchlike, he was selling tea at twelve shillings a pound. He left you something comfortable, I know, and your wife brought you a tidy little bit of money—didn’t she, now?’

‘My wife did not come to me empty-handed.’

‘Of course not; a sensible man like you would not marry a pretty face with an empty pocket. Now, to be perfectly frank with you, I am anxious that my son should be in a position to improve his estate. There’s a great deal might be done for a few thousands—building larger barns, draining the low-lying meadows, and so forth. The money would not be squandered, my good friend. Your grand-

children would profit by any sacrifice you might make.'

'Good,' said Joshua Haggard thoughtfully. 'I think that, upon those conditions, I might give Naomi three thousand pounds for her portion.'

'Not half enough for those necessary improvements. If you could say six thousand, now—'

'Impossible. I have a son to think about.'

'Your son will succeed to your business.'

'For which he must have sufficient capital. We are wholesale dealers in a small way, remember, Mr. Pentreath, and supply a good many village shopkeepers.'

'Of course. What a splendid business yours must be! You can give your daughter six thousand without feeling it.'

'I could not give her so much without injustice to my boy, and nothing could tempt me to that.'

'Pshaw! your business will have doubled itself before your son inherits it. Do you want to make him a millionaire?'

'I want to act fairly between him and his sister. The utmost I could give Naomi, either on her mar-

riage or at my death, would be four or five thousand pounds.'

'Say five and consider it settled,' cried the Squire eagerly.

'And I should expect you to settle land of the same value on my daughter, the rent of the same to be paid to her separate use and maintenance during her life, and the property to descend to her children, with reversion to her husband if she dies childless.'

The Squire's countenance fell, and his small eyes sparkled angrily.

'Why, this is taking a mortgage on my land!' he exclaimed.

'No, Mr. Pentreath; it is only taking care of my daughter. She is incapable of spending such an income on herself, and her receipt of the money would be doubtless a mere form; but I want to feel that I have given my five thousand pounds to her positively, and not to her husband or her father-in-law. Should she be widowed early, the estate so settled would serve to keep her. Should you take it into your head to disinherit your son, the income

from his wife's settlement would keep him out of the workhouse.'

'You are a man of business, Mr. Haggard,' exclaimed the Squire, divided between disappointment and admiration.

'I should be sorry to be in business if I were not. There is Mallowfield Farm, now; I have heard that valued at five thousand pounds. Settle Mallowfield on my daughter, and Oswald shall have the five thousand on his wedding-day, which is as much as to say you shall have the money to spend on barns or drainage.'

'Mallowfield!' gasped the Squire, 'the most compact bit of property on the estate!'

'I can keep my five thousand pounds and my daughter, Mr. Pentreath.'

'There isn't better land in the county than those low-lying pastures. Well, I'll turn it over in my mind, friend Haggard. If you would say six thousand, now—'

'I never say more than I mean.'

'Come now, I came here prepared to be liberal. Your daughter shall have Mallowfield. How canny

of you to pitch upon the best of my farms! And look ye, Mr. Haggard, we'll have the settlements drawn up next week, and you and I will dance at our children's wedding before harvest-home.'

'No, Mr. Pentreath; I told your son he must wait two years for my daughter. He has another year to wait before he calls her wife.'

'Pshaw! you are as bad as that old gentleman in the Bible who served his son-in-law such a shabby trick. Why shouldn't these young people be married out of hand?'

'I don't believe in hasty marriages, sir. My wife and I had been promised to each other three years before we were married.'

'But here, where there is no impediment—'

'There is difference of rank. I want to feel very sure that your son is in earnest—that there is no possibility of after-regrets. He has stood firm for a year, and I believe he loves my daughter. Let him be constant to that attachment for one year more, and I shall be content to trust him with her future. She is very precious to me. I cannot let her go lightly.'

'Egad, I daresay it's the five thousand he won't let go,' thought the Squire.

He ceded the point with a tolerable grace, eager as he had been to get the grocer's money into his clutches. After all, it might be well to have time to weigh the matter quietly—to see if there were no better match possible for Oswald, no more money to be made in the open market of matrimony. He was in bad odour among the county people, and had held himself aloof from them churlishly, not taking the trouble to assoilzie himself and get rid of that evil taint left by the past, as he might have done by a little deference to popular prejudices. His unpopularity had reflected itself upon Oswald, and the young man had grown up without a companion or a friend, and quite outside that charmed circle in which rich young spinsters revolve. Still it might not be too late.

'There are places where young fellows pick up heiresses,' mused the Squire: 'Tunbridge Wells, or Bath, or Cheltenham, or Brighton—places where a good-looking young man with a good old name and a patrimonial estate might marry a fortune for the

asking. But my son has no brains. An adventurer without a sixpence would outmanœuvre him anywhere.'

And then the Squire, composing his features into a satyr-like grin, which was meant for a smile, asked to be presented to his future daughter-in-law; whereupon Joshua opened the parlour-door and called Naomi, who came from the opposite room, pale and trembling a little, as if about to make the acquaintance of an ogre.

The shrivelled old Squire, with his large head and shrunken body, was not altogether unlike the popular idea of the ogre family. His gray hair straggled in sparse locks over his narrow brow, and he wore a pigtail on his high collar of bottle-green velvet—velvet which long and constant wear had made sleeker and more shiny than velvet ought to be. Indeed, the pigtail, for the most part in motion like a pendulum, made its impression upon the velvet.

At his waist the Squire wore a large bunch of keys and seals, which he was wont to rattle as he talked. His large gold watch was known to be the exactest timekeeper in Combhaven; and often when

the whole town had lapsed ignominiously to the rear of Greenwich time, Mr. Pentreath's bell might be heard ringing up his household in the bleak wintry morning with a rigid exactitude to the very moment marked on the dial at the National Observatory.

Very like an ogre looked the Squire as he drew Naomi's head downward to his withered old lips, and honoured her with the least agreeable kiss she had ever had in her life.

'God bless your handsome face!' said the old man graciously. 'From this time forward you must think of me as your father.'

'I never can have but one father, sir,' answered Naomi gravely; 'but I shall always honour and love you, for your son's sake.'

'And you'll come and live at the Grange very soon, my dear, I hope, and keep those idle servants of mine in order'—this of the hardest-working household in Combhaven—'and look to the dairy. I never have a morsel of butter worth eating. This obstinate father of yours talks about Oswald waiting another year, but I see no reason why you should not be married in a month.'

‘Father always knows best,’ said Naomi.

‘What a demure puss it is! If your father were going to be married himself he’d be in a greater hurry, child. I’m an old man, and may not live to see next summer, and I should like to dance at my son’s wedding. That is to say, I should like to see him comfortably married,’ said the Squire, correcting himself; ‘for as to wedding dances, or any such tomfoolery, I never held with them. Life’s much too serious a matter for its most solemn changes to be ushered in by squeaking fiddles and lively jigs.’

Having settled a business matter to his satisfaction, and having, as he believed, made himself eminently agreeable, Squire Pentreath took his leave, escorted to the little green garden-gate by Joshua, and contemplated from the other side of the open street by the landlord of the First and Last.

‘Everything is settled, my dear,’ said Joshua, bending down to kiss his daughter. ‘My sweet girl will be a lady—mistress of Pentreath Grange, and with manifold opportunities of doing good in her generation. But I hope she will never forget that before all and above all she is a Christian, and that

earthly blessings are but charges and responsibilities in the sight of God.'

'I should be something less than your daughter if I forgot that, my dear father,' answered Naomi tenderly.

Never had she loved her father so dearly as in this moment, when the floodtide of happiness rushed in upon her soul with overwhelming force.

'Your lover has been true to you for a year, Naomi, and constant under restrictions that some would think hard; let him but prove steadfast for one year more, and I can give you to him without a shadow of doubt.'

'He will be steadfast, father,' answered the girl firmly, replying out of the fulness of her own faith, which she knew to be incapable of change or wavering.

CHAPTER IX.

‘LOVE IN ONE HAND HIS BOW DID TAKE.’

IT was summer-time still, the tangled hedges fragrant with honeysuckle and the fields purple with clover, when Joshua Haggard entered the little village of Penmoyle again, after a year's absence, on foot and alone. He had been to the extremity of the peninsula to see Nicholas Wild, and to exult in the progress of that young man's ministrations and the growth of his influence; and now, upon his homeward way, he turned aside from the straight road to Truro, to take his rest in the fat pastures of Penmoyle.

He had arranged things better this time than on the last occasion, and had planned his holiday so as to spend a Sunday at Penmoyle and to preach to the little flock there. As on his former visit, it was a Saturday afternoon when he entered the village, and

about the same hour. How peaceful, how unalterable everything looked, a beautiful placidity pervading all the scene—a quiet profound as that almost awful stillness of smooth mountain lakes locked in a circle of silent hills. And yet death found out Penmoyle now and then; and people's joints were racked with rheumatism; and fever, like a furious Malay, ran amuck among the simple villagers; and bad sons grew up to be the torment of neglectful fathers; and village innocence went astray; and all the evils that rend society at large were repeated in little in this narrow world of Penmoyle. But, smiling under a cloudless sky at the close of June, one might think the place a little bit of heaven that had broken off and fallen upon earth. Round it far and wide lay the wild hills of earth, pierced here and there with the shafts of deserted mines; but this green oasis must be a fragment of Paradise.

Joshua contemplated the place with a curious delight. It was not half so picturesque as Combhaven, but its inland beauty, its fertile frame of meadow and flowering hedgerow, moved him to deepest admiration.

‘How pretty the village is!’ he said to himself.
‘I never used to think it so beautiful.’

There was the little chestnut-grove, where the street widened into a village-green, just opposite the homely old inn. And there, at the corner of the green, stood the Miss Weblings’ neat abode, the brazen knocker shining, the brazen birdcage gleaming in the afternoon sun, all the windows shut—it being a principle with the spinsters to exclude dust at some sacrifice of fresh air—the muslin curtains drawn back in neat loops, the flower-pots as red as of old.

But there was something that distracted Joshua’s eye from flower-pots and bird-cages, and that was a girlish figure standing by the gate, a girlish face looking dreamily down the empty village street.

It was Cynthia, indulging in a few minutes’ idle contemplation of the external world after her day’s work was done and that afternoon toilet which was known throughout Penmoyle as ‘cleaning oneself’ had been carefully performed. There was not much to look at, certainly, in the High-street of Penmoyle, not much excuse for dawdling or frivolous curiosity,

but still Cynthia looked. There was a lumbering old wain loaded high with fragrant hay standing in front of the inn, while its custodian drank deep of a stinging cider in the bar; there were the innkeeper's poultry picking up a free living in the highway; there was the landlady's pet jackdaw discoursing hoarsely to the empty air from his wicker cage in front of the parlour-window with its scarlet curtain, which looked so cheerful on dark winter nights; there were the children playing Tommy Touchwood under the chestnuts, and making as much noise as if a second Herod had just issued his edict for the extermination of another fourteen thousand innocents. And here came the tall figure of Joshua, in his black coat and breeches, and well-fitting gray stockings, and neat buckled shoes, walking slowly up the street.

Cynthia gave a start at sight of him, and flung the gate open and ran to meet him, blushing, impetuous, her blue eyes full of joy.

'I knew that you would come,' she said.

Had she grown lovelier in the year that was gone, or had she always been thus supremely lovely?

Joshua asked himself wonderingly. It seemed to him that he had never beheld anything so beautiful as that innocent face lifted up to him in tenderest regard, those frank eyes, that rosy smiling mouth, a complexion as of blush-roses—the old half-forgotten blush-roses that grew in the gardens of long ago, ivory-white petals deepening to a soft carnation at the heart of the flower.

'I knew you would come,' repeated Cynthia. 'Miss Priscilla said you would write first to say that you were coming; but I thought you would come just like this, when no one expected you, walking quietly up the street some Saturday afternoon. I thought it would be on a Saturday; and I have watched for you every Saturday since the roses began to flower. You said you would come in the summer. Are you going back to Truro for the night coach?'

'No, Cynthia; I am going to stay till Monday, if my friends will have me.'

'How glad I am!' she cried, clasping her hands. 'And you will read to us again in the best parlour?'

'Yes, Cynthia. I hope you have been good.'

'I have learned to read the Bible.'

'That's good news. And have you been industrious and obedient?'

'I don't quite know; but I think the ladies are pleased with me. Miss Priscilla has given me her flowery gown, and Miss Webling has given me a buckle; and they let me sit with them of evenings when there's no company.'

'Then I think you must have been good. Worthy people like the Miss Weblings would treat you according to your deserts.'

'They have been very kind, and I am very happy.'

'And you have never wished yourself back among those show-folks?'

'Never, never. I was fond of the pony; but he was the only thing I really cared for. If I were quite sure nobody would ill-use him I should never give a thought to my old life; but I do think about him sometimes, poor fellow.'

'You have never heard or seen anything of your people?'

'I have never seen them. Some of the school-

children saw them last September on the Truro road—I know it was them by the pony—but they never came nearer than that. I have dreamed about them many a time, and woke crying, thinking I was with them again.’

‘You shall never be with them again, Cynthia. Why, if they were to come this way now they would hardly know you, you have grown so—sedate-looking.’

She was neatly clad in one of those lavender prints he had selected. She wore a muslin handkerchief across her shoulders, a muslin cap on her fair soft hair, which was simply dressed after own fashion, in which she had reproduced unawares the style of a Greek statue. Her rounded white arms were bare, the hands reddened a little with labour, but neither large nor ill-shaped.

‘I shall hear what your mistresses have to say of you,’ said Joshua, as he moved towards the doll’s-house door; ‘and if they give a good account of your conduct I shall be better pleased than I can say.’

He had little fear of their report. Such innocent gladness as made radiant Cynthia’s face never

went along with evil-doing. The girl ushered him into the best parlour, and then ran up-stairs to rouse her mistresses, who were taking a gentle siesta on their comfortable tent-bed—a bedstead whose posts had been decapitated to accommodate them to the lowly ceiling of the Miss Weblings' chamber.

The spinsters reposed side by side upon the coverlet, the *County Chronicle* spread under their feet to guard the spotless counterpane, their hair repapered, lest the corkscrew curls should relax from their wiry stiffness in the temporary dissolution of slumber. On hearing of Mr. Haggard's arrival the simultaneous movement of the sisters was to rush to the small square looking-glass, and take their hair out of papers; the next, to smooth out their ample muslin collars—assisted in this operation by Cynthia—and to adjust the velvet bands upon their foreheads. Then they washed their hands with sisterly familiarity in the same basin, not forgetting to expectorate genteelly in the water lest it should lead to unsisterly tiffs, and anon descended the corkscrew staircase.

In the parlour the greetings of last summer were

gone through again with exact reproduction. The ‘seedy’ cake and the cowslip wine were brought out of the panelled cupboard, and Mr. Haggard was asked solemnly if he had dined. This time he was able to reply conscientiously, that he had eaten a hearty dinner of pork and greens at a roadside inn; for people used to dine upon pork and greens in those days, and were not ashamed to own it.

‘I am going to spend Sunday at Penmoyle,’ said Joshua; ‘there are friends I was not lucky enough to see last year; so I have given myself a holiday to-morrow.’

‘That’s good news,’ cried Deborah; ‘and you’ll stay here of course? Our spare room is always kept aired, though we don’t often have a visitor, unless it’s when old uncle Weston comes from Penzance.’

Small as the cottage was it boasted its spare bedchamber, over the best parlour—a room glorified by a good deal of fine art in the shape of various samplers executed in crewels by the Miss Weblings’ prize pupils.

‘I shall be very pleased to stay here,’ replied

Joshua, 'if you're sure I sha'n't be putting you out.'

'Putting us out!' exclaimed the impulsive Priscilla; 'dear Mr. Haggard, when we value your acquaintance as one of our most blessed privileges!'

'And as for linen,' said the more practical Deborah, 'we've the stock of house-linen our dear mother left us—every bit of the yarn her own spinning—the sheets and tablecloths we top-sewed when we were children.'

'And now tell me how you have got on with Cynthia,' said Joshua, trying to feel as if the question were not one that touched him nearly—trying to approach the subject with the same equable spirit in which he would have discussed the welfare of any member of his little flock at Combhaven. 'Has she been docile and useful? Do you think you shall make her a good servant?'

'Mr. Haggard,' said Deborah, so solemnly that Joshua thought something bad was coming—he felt himself breathing quicker, as in a moment of fear—'Mr. Haggard, that girl is a treasure.'

‘Thank God for that!’ exclaimed Joshua, with infinite relief.

‘It’s not many people would pick up such a pearl by the wayside; but it’s natural that angels should come unawares to such a good man as you.’

‘Never mind me,’ interjected Joshua eagerly. ‘Tell me about Cynthia.’

‘I don’t think there’s a better girl in the West of England, or one that’s quicker and neater with her hands. Of course sister and I have taken pains with her. I’m not going to deny that, or that we took all the more pains with her out of regard for you. But she has been so quick to learn, with her hands especially. I don’t pretend to say that she has a powerful mind—not like sister Priscilla’s, for instance.’ (Priscilla screwed her lips together and tried not to look proud.) ‘Not a mind to grasp long division or the genealogies of the tribes of Israel, or the wars with the Philistines.’ (Priscilla shook her head gravely, as if it held as much scriptural knowledge as Dr. Smith’s *Dictionary of the Bible*.) ‘But for handiness and willingness and neatness and goodness of heart, there’s no one to surpass her.’

She nursed me beautifully for three weeks, when I had a bad attack of my quinsy last winter; and if you'd seen how prettily she ornamented this parlour with holly and greenstuff at Christmas time, you'd have been quite struck.'

'I am more pleased than I can tell you,' said Joshua; and the unwonted glow upon his dark cheek told that the pleasure was very real.

'Of course you'd naturally be anxious. It was an awful risk. I'm sure I used to wake in the middle of the night often, when she was first with us, and tremble for the silver teapot. She might have cut both our throats and gone off with the plate, if she'd been badly inclined.'

Both sisters shuddered at this appalling possibility.

'And she has learned to read, she tells me,' said Joshua.

'Bee-autifully!' exclaimed Priscilla. 'We never had a pupil, young or old, that learnt so quick. She said she wanted to learn, to please her kind friend who took her out of bondage—meaning you, Mr. Haggard. Many an evening has that poor child sat

puzzling over her book, when she first began—and even the letters were some of them strange to her—and wouldn’t leave off when we told her.’

‘I am proud to think that I was not mistaken when I read truth and innocence in her countenance,’ said Joshua.

‘And there’s something so genteel about her,’ pursued Priscilla. ‘She never presumes upon one’s kindness, or forgets her station. I’m sure the way we’ve let her sit with us of an evening would have turned some girls’ heads; but she has always kept her place and respected ours.’

‘It does my heart good to hear this account of her,’ said Joshua. ‘And now I’ll go down the village and look in upon my old friends. Mr. Martin still lives next the chapel, I suppose?’

‘Yes, dear old gentleman; and though he’s getting feeble and is not the preacher he used to be, people come from six miles off to hear him, and the chapel’s so crowded that on warm Sundays sister and I are obliged to take peppermint lozenges to keep off the faintness. There’s many a heart will be stirred if you preach to-morrow, Mr. Haggard.’

'Don't forget that we tea at five,' said Deborah.

'No, I shall be back by five,' replied Joshua slowly.

He had very little inclination to leave that best parlour of the Miss Weblings, although he had come to Penmoyle to see all his old friends. It was not to be supposed that he would waste two days of his earnest working life—a life in which leisure was almost unknown—upon an inquiry about the progress of that waif and stray he had picked up by the wayside. A letter would have served to make that inquiry. No, he had come to Penmoyle to see those brother Christians to whom he had preached justification by faith, a Saviour's infinite atonement of all human sin, years ago; he had come to talk with those in whose hearts he had been the first to kindle religious fervour.

He left the Miss Weblings' parlour with some sense of effort, notwithstanding; a kind of apathy as to those old friends of his seemed to have stolen upon him since his arrival at Penmoyle. He desired nothing so much as to sit in that neatly-ordered room and hear Cynthia read, or hear her mistresses

praise her. But the call of duty was paramount, so he took up his hat and went.

Mr. Martin was a little old man with white hair, who remembered John Wesley, and had imbibed his enthusiasm from that fountain of simple and spiritual earnestness. He was a good old man, and much beloved by his humble followers; and though he preached in a somewhat cracked and quavering treble, and spun the same thin thread of doctrine through many sermons to attenuation, and generally chose his text from some obscure passage in the minor Prophets, he was listened to with devout attention, and admired as an oracle. He was great at tea-meetings and love-feasts, and repeated his little elderly jokes and told the same anecdotes about the Wesleys year after year. He had some pretensions to the literary faculty, and had written an account of the last hours and death-bed conversations of an interesting member of his flock, a girl whose piety had been the delight of an admiring circle, and who had been cut off untimely by ‘a consumption.’ This little volume of fifty pages was more popular at Penmoyle than any of that pernicious literature

which an unbelieving race accepted at the hands of such arch-offenders as Byron, Moore, Godwin, Monk Lewis, and Shelley—names which had been breathed as by some wandering blast from Pandemonium in the awe-struck ears of Penmoyle. An inhabitant of this remote settlement, on entering the literary circles of the metropolis, would have been astonished to find that Mr. Martin's biography of Miss Elizabeth Lucas was not considered a classic, nor as familiar to the reading public as *Rasselas* or the *Vicar of Wakefield*.

On the female mind in Penmoyle the book had exercised as strong an influence as had the *Confessions of Rousseau* or the *Sorrows of Werther* on the world in general; and a young woman of Mr. Martin's flock would have considered that, next to marrying a rich farmer and driving one's own chaise-cart, the happiest destiny would be to die early and discourse wisely on one's death-bed, like Elizabeth Lucas.

Mr. Martin wore his literary laurels meekly, but, in his heart of hearts, was prouder of having written that little book than of all his long and blameless

life and its good influence upon his fellow-men. He amused his leisure hours by mild coquetting with the Muses, and composed sacred verses of the feeblest strain, which he screwed out of his seething brain with infinite labour, and had some idea of publishing by subscription, could he but get the lines more of a length, and resolve his own doubts as to certain rhymes which necessity had constrained him to use, although his ear had not approved them.

This simple-minded pastor lived in a four-roomed cottage next his chapel—a cottage neatly furnished, and beautified not a little by various offerings from the Methodists of the district. An ancient widow, whose family and belongings were lost in the darkness of prehistoric Penmoyle, ministered to the good man’s modest wants, and kept his habitation spotless, labouring at her mission with activity and industry which would have done credit to those younger servants who were known at Penmoyle as ‘ bits of girls.’ This faithful housekeeper, neatly clad in a black gown, widow’s cap, and muslin kerchief, opened the door to Joshua’s knock. She had worn a widow’s cap for the last forty years, and would have doubted

her own identity had she seen herself in a glass with any other head-covering.

‘Lor sakes,’ she exclaimed, with a low curtsy, ‘if it ain’t Mr. Haggard!’

As the cottage door opened straight into the parlour, Mr. Martin, writing with laborious slowness at his table, heard the ejaculation, and rose hastily to welcome his guest, with a formal cordiality full of a certain old-fashioned dignity, as of one who had been accustomed all his life to be respected and to confer a favour by his kindness.

‘And what has brought my good friend this way?’ he asked. ‘Glad am I to see him once more beside my hearth. Go, get a mutton-chop or a steak, Martha, and cook it nicely for Mr. Haggard. I have a cask of cider from the same orchard as that you used to drink twenty years ago.’

‘You needn’t trouble about the chop, Mrs. Hope. I have dined, my dear sir; but I shall be pleased to drink your health in a glass of that excellent cider before I leave you. I am thankful to see you looking hale and hearty.’

‘Ay,’ replied the old man, with a tremulous

cheeriness, 'Providence has been very good to me. Except for a little stiffness in my joints in winter time, and a slight uncertainty in my hearing, which I can hardly call deafness, I might easily forget that I am getting old. I can still enjoy the manifold beauties of God's earth, and my books;' glancing with pride at his neatly-arranged library, guarded by the glass doors of an old-fashioned bookcase. 'I can still employ my leisure hours in poetic musings, which, although perchance beneath the regard of finite man, are, I venture to hope, acceptable to an infinite God. Ah, my dearest friend, it is a strange and fearful blessing for the aged to be spared when Time's sickle mows down the youthful.'

Here the pastor's eye glittered with a tear of regret for his beloved pupil Elizabeth Lucas, and Joshua made haste to change the conversation. He had heard that story of Elizabeth Lucas's lingering illness and pious discourses a good many times from the gentle old pastor's lips, and rather dreaded a repetition thereof. The pious platitudes were milk for babes rather than meat for strong men; and although Joshua had a firm belief in the Christian

graces of the departed Elizabeth, he was not quite clear as to her share in these holy dialogues; just as in reading the *Phædo* some students may entertain a doubt as to which is Plato and which is Socrates.

Having fortunately escaped this conversational quicksand, in which he saw himself on the point of being engulfed, Mr. Haggard and his elder friend talked pleasantly of each other's ministrations, and the welfare and progress of their particular sect, which, although taking its origin from the great evangelical movement begun by Wesley, was but a minor division of the dissenting Church. Mr. Martin talked of his crowded chapel; his night-school for farm-labourers; his afternoon class for young women in domestic service, which young persons of a superior social standing were invited to attend, could they so far subjugate their pride as to sit side by side with the hard-handed daughters of toil.

'That is a bright little creature over yonder,' said Mr. Martin, with a nod in the direction of the Miss Weblings' domicile; 'she has come to my class-meetings regularly, and has made wonderful progress. I never met with a clearer mind. I do

not say that it is deep, or that she is a being of lofty aspirations, like my sainted Elizabeth—’

‘ I am delighted to hear you speak so kindly of her,’ exclaimed Joshua. ‘ You have heard, I dare say—’

‘ How you rescued her from the children of Belial? Yes, my good friend, she has told me of your kindness with tears. She has a grateful and a tender heart; she has a pleasant voice too, and sings our hymns sweetly. It was but last Sabbath that I was moved by hearing her sing the “ Land of Canaan.” There were tones which reminded me of that heavenly-minded girl, whose last hours—’

‘ And my poor little waif and stray has made spiritual progress?’

‘ Undoubtedly. I don’t think you could ask her a question about the Israelites in the desert, or the building of Solomon’s temple, that she would fail to answer correctly. And now, my good friend, tell me how long you are going to stay among us, and if you will give us one of your powerful discourses to-morrow. We are collecting funds for a new chapel, our present humble building being sorely inadequate.

A sermon from you would insure a good collection.'

Joshua declared his willingness to assist so worthy a cause; and after half an hour's cheerful conversation, left his old friend to resume his gentle flirtation with the Nine, and went on to visit other acquaintances of the past.

Five o'clock found Mr. Haggard at the little green door, where Cynthia stood watching for him on the threshold, just as she had watched by the gate that afternoon.

'The tea's mashed,' she said brightly, 'and the ladies told me to watch for you.'

She darted back to the kitchen before he had time to reply, having the baking of certain rock-cakes, seedy and curranty, esteemed a delicacy in Penmoyle, on her mind. Mr. Haggard looked after her curiously, wondering at the difference between this light and airy form, just vanishing from his sight at the end of the passage, and the rotund and robust Sally who ministered to his wants at home. Yet both were of the same clay he reminded himself, and the one as precious in the sight of her Maker as the other.

The sisters Webling, glorified by additional embellishment in the way of ear-droppers and brooches and buckles—but not in their Sunday gowns, *those* Mr. Haggard would see to-morrow—received the minister amidst the stately elegance of the best parlour. There was the silver teapot he knew so well, with its horn handle and little perforated basket dangling at the spout; there were the willow-pattern cups and saucers, and crisp home-baked bread, and slices of ham garnished with parsley, and three new-laid eggs in glass egg-cups, and a plate of strawberries—quite a collation.

'I hope you have brought us a good appetite, dear Mr. Haggard,' said Priscilla.

'Indeed, Miss Priscilla, I am not accustomed to such luxuries. Our tea at home is a very plain meal. I was brought up to live plainly, and have brought up my children in the same way. But I have no doubt I shall do justice to your plenteous table.'

Cynthia came in with the rock-cakes, and retired as soon as she had set them on the table, dropping her modest curtsy as she went out at the door.

Somehow, in spite of the strong tea, the new-laid eggs, the excellent ham which the hospitable sisters pressed upon him, in spite of that exalted appreciation of his own merits which breathed in every sentence spoken by these spinsters, the tea-drinking, protracted for an hour or more, seemed rather a weary business to Joshua. He found his thoughts wandering backward to the little red-floored kitchen, luminous in the rosy sunset, and the gracious figure of girlhood by the open casement. He found himself reflecting what a blessed thing it was to have rescued this wild weed, neglected by the roadside, and to find her blossoming so fair a flower, instead of listening, as he ought in common courtesy to have listened, to Deborah's account of one of her old scholars who had gone to America, and was on the high-road to a fortune, and who had avouched in a letter to his mother—a letter written on the other side of the broad Atlantic—that he should never have come to any good if the Miss Weblings had not taught him his multiplication-table.

‘He was a dull boy,’ said Deborah; ‘many’s the time I’ve had to put the dunce’s cap on him and

stand him up on a form, though it went against me. And the trouble I had over his pot-hooks—there, it was really trying. But it's nice to think that he should remember and be grateful, so far away. It speaks well for human nature, you know,' concluded Miss Webling in a patronising tone, as if she belonged to a different species.

After tea came the usual request for a chapter and Mr. Haggard's exposition thereof; and Cynthia, having removed the tea-things, took her seat below the salt, that is to say, on the chair nearest the door; while the spinsters, each seated in her particular chair, straightened their long backs and folded their mittened hands and assumed exactly the same expression of countenance.

This time Joshua took the story of the traveller coming down to Jerusalem who fell among thieves. Perhaps some faint resemblance between that sacred record and his own rescue of the girl yonder may have influenced his selection, but he hardly owned as much to himself. His simple yet eloquent commentary touched the girl deeply. Every word of those gospels was now familiar to her. She had read the

New Testament with fervid interest. The sacred story, new to her girlish mind, had been verily a revelation, and she had accepted this new creed—the first ever offered to her understanding—with faith and affection that knew no limit. It seemed all intensely real to her ardent nature. Her imagination pictured every scene, filled up every detail: she could see the divine face shining upon her, the little children gathered round the gracious Teacher; the blind, the sick, the lame, the leper, the outcast, seeking comfort and healing from that inexhaustible fountain of mercy. She saw all these things in holy waking dreams—saw them as really as some hysterical nun in her ecstatic trance.

But for Joshua Haggard she would never have known this blessed history, never have belonged to those happy and elected souls chosen to share the Master's rest when earth's brief pilgrimage was over. But for him she would have lived her wretched life among the lost ones, doomed to perdition after death, shut out for ever from the glorious light which shone upon that happy section of humanity selected for salvation. That without Joshua's mediation she

might have come into the Christian fold, that some other friendly hand might have opened the door to her, was an idea that never occurred to her mind, more inclined to enthusiasm than to logic. She accepted Joshua as her spiritual sponsor, the benefactor who had given her the heritage of salvation, and her gratitude was measureless as her value of the blessings she had so nearly lost.

There were tears in her eyes as he dwelt on the story of the Samaritan.

‘You did much more than that for me,’ she said softly when he had finished. ‘It was not my body you saved, but my soul. When I stopped to rest on the common that day, I did not know that I had a soul, or that heaven was any more than the blue sky where the birds sing.’

‘It’s wonderful to think of,’ exclaimed Priscilla, proud of her pupil; ‘and now she can say off the books of the Bible as quick as anything, without missing one. Let the minister hear you, Cynthia.’

The girl obeyed, and rattled over the titles of the holy books in a string, as she had been taught by Priscilla.

‘Now let’s have the counties of England and Wales, my dear.’

Cynthia repeated an ancient rhymed list of the shires, which sounded like an incantation. Her preceptress listened approvingly, with her head on one side, in a critical attitude, proud of her work.

‘I should like to hear you read a chapter in the Gospel, Cynthia,’ said Mr. Haggard.

Whereupon the girl turned over the leaves of her Testament thoughtfully, and then read the story of the raising of Lazarus. She read beautifully, with feeling and understanding in every tone. Tears of gladness filled Joshua’s eyes as he listened. This was the richest reward he had ever reaped for his good works.

When she had read her chapter, Cynthia withdrew modestly to her more correct sphere in the kitchen, and resumed her plain sewing by the last rays of summer daylight, while the Miss Weblings entertained Joshua for the rest of the evening.

At half-past nine, quite a late hour for that feminine household, Joshua was invited to say an evening prayer; and Cynthia again appeared at the tink-

ling of a small handbell which Priscilla held outside the door; and after the prayer, which was long and fervent, like all Joshua’s prayers, and personal also, glancing at his blessed work in this lowly handmaiden’s conversion from the paths of darkness and error, Cynthia was ordered to sing a hymn.

She stood before them with hands meekly folded, and in a voice clear as a bird’s, a bright and silvery soprano, sang one of the favourite hymns of that particular sect—simple not unmelodious verses telling of the happy land beyond death’s awful river—verses set to a tune that had a lively lilt in it, and was hardly so suggestive of devotion as one of Mozart’s sacred numbers.

After the hymn Joshua was pressed to refresh himself once more with cowslip wine and seedy cake; and on refusing those luxuries, he was escorted, with a newly set candle and as much ceremony as a corkscrew or belfry staircase will admit, to his lavender-scented chamber, where the dimity draperies were starched to such a degree that they stood alone.

The midsummer moon looked in at him through the diamond panes of his casement as he laid him-

self down, a little tired after a twenty-mile walk and the various emotions of the day. What was this strange feeling, too sweet for pain, too thrilling for happiness, which swelled his breast? What this unknown rapture which moved him to tears?

‘Thank God!’ he ejaculated involuntarily, yet scarcely knew what new blessing that was which moved him to such thankfulness. He dared not question his own thoughts. He was like one awakened out of a trance who finds himself in a land where all things are strange. He sank to sleep with that vague mysterious happiness in mind and heart, fell asleep and dreamed that he had passed into that happier land on the farther side of the dark river, and that the first to give him greeting there was Cynthia with a face like an angel’s.

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